



A different world is possible

19th Sunday of the Year And the Solemnity of the Assumption of Our Lady

Reflection Mgr Daniel McHugh

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“Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it” (Lk 11 : 28)

It was encouraging to see the great coverage there was on BBC and Sky this last weekend of the “Jubilee of Youth” in Rome. It was reported that 1 million young people from 146 different countries took part. Pope Leo was seen flying by helicopter to the celebrations at Tor Vergata on the outskirts of Rome. He was heard to say: “How much the world needs young people who are witnesses of hope.” Indeed, it was a moving spectacle in the midst of war and conflict in so many parts of the world. On Sunday at Mass in St Peter’s Square Pope Leo said Young People are a sign “a different world is possible.” I feel the jubilee event was picked up and reported on in the media because it was so amazing, so happy. I found myself asking how can we take inspiration from it and pass it on to young people in our parishes and chaplaincies. As the week has gone on, I have found the reporting continuing: today 5th August I saw on X a short video of the Prime Minister of Italy, Giorgia Meloni, speaking at Tor Vergata of the extraordinary festival never to forget. She spoke of it as giving the direction to take. Closer to home it was so encouraging to see the 600 young people who had gone there from Ireland: they spoke of working for something deeper; a happiness that gives deep joy; which was to be found in the hope proclaimed by the Church. In a country where the Faith had been rejected after so many scandals, young people were finding happiness that could not be found elsewhere.

The readings from the Scriptures on the 19th Sunday and the Solemnity of the Assumption of Our Lady help us renew this hope in our own lives. The section from the letter to the Hebrews on the 19th Sunday focusses on the example of the Faith of Abraham and Sarah who “was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.”

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At Tor Vergata Pope Leo assured the young people that those who believe are never alone; he encouraged them saying “Jesus is walking with us”. He would encourage us as he did them – to pray: “Resta con noi Signore”, “Stay with us Lord.”

Father Ferlita in “The Paths of Life” tells a story about a family beach house where he struggled to lock the back door and how it gave way when he lent on it. He says: “That, I say, is the reverse image of God’s faithfulness. God is someone you can lean on, rely on, depend on. He is “the strong fortress, the rock of refuge” that does not give way (Ps 31:12). The Hebrew word for faithfulness is “emet”. In the past it was often translated as truth. It designates a reality that is firm and unchanging. It does not connote the “true” God as opposed to the false, but rather one upon whom his people can rely. As Sarah did, “for she thought that the one who had made the promise was trustworthy” (Hebr. 11.11).

The Solemnity of the Assumption of Our Lady is a Holy Day of Obligation in England and Wales. In my mind I recall Mass for this Feast at the little hill town at Rocca di Papa above the summer house of the English College when I was a student in Rome, and the evening fireworks in Castel Gandolfo across Lake Albano. I note Pope Leo is returning to his summer house in Castel Gandolfo for a few days at the time of the celebration.

For the Church the Assumption of Our Lady has long been held as an important Catholic belief. The belief was “not defined as a dogma, however, until 1950 by Pope Pius XII. The Loyola Press commentary says “Today’s Gospel highlights Mary’s faith. Mary’s faith enabled her to recognise the work of God in her people’s history and in her own life. Her openness to God allowed God to work through her so that salvation might come to all. Mary is a model and symbol of the Church. May we be like Mary, open and cooperative in God’s plan of salvation.”

With the young people at the Jubilee Celebrations last weekend, we give thanks for rediscovering the wonder of God’s call to Faith in our lives and we express that in the words of Mary: “My soul glorifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.” (the Gospel of the Assumption)

May we – with Mary’s prayers – be ready for the coming of the Son of Man at whatever moment he chooses to come: the message of the Gospel for the 19th Sunday of the Year.

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