



**"Be Open to the Beauty of Life"
(Pope's Prayer Intention First Friday November)**

**Reflection for the 33rd Week of the Year
16 November 2025**

Mgr Daniel McHugh

"Straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near" (Luke 21:28)

I always take note of the Pope's Prayer Intention for the month, which is published to coincide with the First Friday when by tradition we attend Mass adoring the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This month of November the Intention is "For the prevention of suicide" and the strapline "Let us pray that those who are tempted to commit suicide may find the support, care and love they need in their community, and be open to the beauty of life." You might wonder why is this such an important matter these days that the Holy Father has highlighted it in this way?

The Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network, a Pontifical Society, has expanded on this Intention published in Vatican News to include "those living in darkness and despair" and through the "Pope Video", produced in collaboration with Vatican Media. The Video opens with the Pope inviting the Faithful to join him in praying that "those who are struggling with suicidal thoughts might find the support, care, and love they need in their community and be open to the beauty of life." Pope Leo begins his prayer by asking the Lord, who invites "the weary and the

Monsignor Daniel McHugh

Co-ordinator for Ethnic Chaplaincies in the Archdiocese



burdened” (as Jesus says in the Gospel) to come to Him and find rest in His heart. He goes on to pray that, the Lord gives us all “an attentive and compassionate heart, capable of offering comfort and support, also with the necessary professional help... May we know,” the Pope said, “how to be close with respect and tenderness, helping to heal wounds, build bonds, and open horizons.” In this context the Pope prays, “Together may we rediscover that life is a gift, that there is still beauty and meaning, even in the midst of pain and suffering.” The Holy Father also clearly acknowledged that arriving in such a dark place can affect anyone, pointing out that even those who follow Jesus are “vulnerable to sadness without hope.” The Worldwide Prayer Network goes on to quote the World Health Organization as saying that around 720 thousand people take their own lives each year. Over half of all suicides occur prior to the age of 50.

Quite accidentally, I came across a YouTube video of a priest from the Diocese of Tuam in Ireland, preaching on this subject as we enter the month of November. He speaks as a priest in a parish about the number of Funerals he has been taking recently and the staggering incidents of suicide, especially among middle age men. As a pastor he asks how do we address this, mentioning first factors that don't help:

- he appeals to the media to stop attacking the Catholic Faith in Ireland. He says a person of hope and refuge is to be found in Jesus. If religion and faith are seen as something of antiquity, where do people go who have no purpose or meaning in life?
- he appeals to the Government: he says legislation and guidance from there are to the effect that you can end life if you wish.

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- he appeals to his fellow priests mentioning especially the Sacraments of Anointing and Reconciliation. He focusses especially on Confession, where love and mercy are to be found. Here he says the discouraged and wounded are given new life.
- he goes on to address all those paying tribute to people who have died saying don't say things like "he's in a better place"; many families are left heartbroken.
- and then he concludes by speaking to those who are down. He appeals to them to hold on, speak to someone; you may be going through a dark tunnel, but you will come through on the other side. You may not be able to change the beginning, but you can change the ending!

I noted many people responded positively to the Sermon; they were especially appreciative that the priest was speaking out on this situation, and looking to practical ways of addressing it.

When we look to the Scriptures, Church teaching and practice, and reflect on what we hear/see there prayerfully, we find so much that guides us through the challenges life brings.

I chose 2 points for this week's Reflection:

- "Be open to the beauty of life" the second part of the Pope's Prayer Intention for November. I would be thinking of nature at this time of year, the autumn leaves and the rising sun after a long dark night that I find so awe inspiring. You can see the beauty of life in so many places, but you may need to look for it!

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- And “straighten up and raise your heads because your redemption is drawing near” which is taken from the same Chapter of St Luke as the Gospel for the 33rd Sunday, Jesus was speaking in the context of persecution for the Faith, something He had to go through to reach new life. We will all experience the Cross, but the Lord walks with us to new life. Prayer is letting Him speak to us on the way.

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