



25<sup>th</sup> Week of Ordinary Time 20<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> September 2020

Reflection – Mgr Daniel McHugh

I will always remember being stuck in ice and snow on a small side road in the Cotswolds a few years ago: the roads seemed safe and clear enough, but as I was on the way up a hill the whole scene changed. The car slid into a ditch: the mobile was not accessing the satellite so well, the AA was going to take hours to arrive, I had a visitor coming, back at the presbytery. Just as it was sinking in that I was in a hopeless situation, a man in a 4-wheel-drive stopped, a little dog upfront looking out. He had seen and helped a number of people getting stuck like this he said, and he stopped another man in a car, and the 2 pushed my car out of the ditch. This man was enjoying helping people out, wanted nothing for it, and went off to save others.

I was reminded of this story when reflecting on today's Gospel and the generosity of the owner of the vineyard. I imagine many people will have stories of extraordinary generosity, undeserved gifts.

When Jesus told the story of the vineyard Workers he was speaking of the "end times" and the extraordinary generosity of God. The story, the parable was intended to communicate this. We speak of God's generosity, undeserved gift as "Grace". Hence the Hymn Amazing Grace, liked by so many because they know the journey we are on as Christians is an extraordinary life given freely by God, undeserved on our part. Starting with Baptism we have come to life in Christ and our journey, despite the bumps, the ice and snow and the occasional ditch, is marked by the generosity of God, which we experience particularly in the Sacraments. I was struck by an incident yesterday, Wednesday, the morning of the Papal Audience in Rome. My friend, a journalist, tweeted that a young couple got the Pope's attention. The young man proposed and she accepted in front of Francis. They were then blessed by him. Its noticeable that he often has young couples at his audiences and highlights the wonder of marriage and family. And it is wonderful when young people see marriage as a gift of God, a Grace to be celebrated, part of God's plan for the human race, a vocation to be lived out in the Grace of the Sacrament, so much more than a contract entered into before an "authorised person" making it a legal entity with all the accompanying rights and obligations. Important as all that is, how much more it (marriage) becomes when it is celebrated before God and blessed as a way to live now in Christ and finally enter life eternal surrounded by family who have come to know, through parents, of God's call and his generosity in Christ.

So today's Gospel is not about social justice: you know, people getting a fair wage. It is about more than this. It is about God's Grace. Sadly, not everyone wants to accept it: in a world that is distracted by so many things, serious and fake, many do not see the wonder of the gift that is offered in Christ, life in Him now and in eternity.

**Monsignor Daniel McHugh**

Co-ordinator for Ethnic Chaplaincies in the Archdiocese

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I have focused on marriage (one of the seven Sacraments – all moments of Grace) because it is a sadness that so many couples do not see it in relation to God and life in Him, and therefore do not celebrate the Sacrament. Not only does this mean they themselves miss out on something Divine that changes their whole perspective on life, but also it can mean their children miss out too.

God speaks through the Prophet Isaiah in the first reading “yes, the heavens are as high above the earth as my ways are above your ways, my thoughts are above your thoughts”.

I don't condemn those who do not accept the invitation to enter the Master's Vineyard, I am just sad they have settled for something less, something narrower and less fulfilling. I continue to work and pray, as St Paul did, that many may come to know and accept God's invitation to work for Him and so enter the Kingdom.

10 September 10, 2020

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