



30th Week of the Year 25th/26th October 2020

Reflection / Homily – Mgr Daniel McHugh

“This is the greatest and first Commandment.”

Years ago, on my way to Mount Sinai, I remember the guide telling us “this was the place where the incident of the Golden Calf took place”. It is recorded in the Book of Exodus. Moses was shocked when he came down from Mount Sinai with the Commandment to find that God’s people had apostatized, they had broken their promise to worship Yahweh alone; they were attracted by the gods around them, and worship of the Golden Calf was one of them!

You may remember some years ago the Church breaking with Amnesty International: it is a famous and wonderful organisation working for human rights across the world. It was founded by a Catholic in England in 1961, but, influenced by the world in which we live, it became pro-abortion so denying the human rights of unborn children. In 2007 Archbishop (now Cardinal) Nichols announced the break on behalf of the Hierarchy of England and Wales. It was sad that things had to come to this.

I mention this because we have the first two Commandments spoken of in the Gospel today. As Catholics we, of course, strive to obey both: worship of the one God and loving neighbor as ourselves. But, it is important for us to remember that the first is the greatest, even though we show our love of God in loving our neighbor. Pope Francis in his address at the Papal Audience earlier today, Wednesday 21st October, as I write this Reflection said: “Those who adore God, love his children. Those who respect God, respect human beings.” As the Amnesty affair demonstrates, it is possible, with the best intentions, to get onto the wrong track even in trying to love our neighbor.

It says in Scripture that “we are to love our neighbor as ourselves”. But, how do we see ourselves, do we see ourselves as “Sons and Daughters of God”? That is what is highlighted at Baptism. Clearly it is something we only come to understand more fully as we travel through life nurtured by the Scripture, Church Teaching and Prayer.

Patriarch Bartholomew, the Spiritual Leader of Eastern Orthodoxy, commenting on the Popes Encyclical Fratelli Tutti, said just this past week: “Before the arrogant man – god, we preach the God-Man”. If the Pandemic has taught us anything, it has taught us we are not gods, that we must look to the God-Man, Jesus on the Cross. We must allow God’s Spirit to re-make us so that when we reach out to others we do so as Children of God, reaching out in love, as Christ did.

Dr Joseph Pollard in a Homily for this Sunday refers to St Francis of Assisi and a Prayer he wrote inspired by the Our Father where he says this: “May we love our neighbors as ourselves, by drawing them all with our whole strength to Your love”.

Monsignor Daniel McHugh

Co-ordinator for Ethnic Chaplaincies in the Archdiocese



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When we restore and beautify our churches, when we create fine art and stained glass to embellish them, when we choose our vestments and colors with care, when we compose fine music to accompany the Liturgy, we are proclaiming God is first in our lives. And, if when we care for the sick and elderly in our communities, and reach out to support the hungry in foodbanks, we do so inspired by those words of St Francis: then we are not as likely to make the mistake of falling into a new idolatry, inspired by the values of a world turned in on itself. That was what happened at Sinai: it is what happened to Amnesty too. It can happen to us as well!!

22 October 2020

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