



## Listening and learning

### Reflection for the 16<sup>th</sup> Week of the Year – 20 July 2025

Mgr Daniel McHugh

*“Blessed are those who hold fast to the Word of God”*

*[Luke 8:15]*

I am writing this Reflection on the occasion of the Memorial of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. At Mass I chose to have the Prayers for the Memorial, but the Readings of the Weekday for the 15<sup>th</sup> Week of the Year (Year 1). It was a ‘blessed’ choice because the Reading from Exodus is about God speaking to the Moses from the ‘Burning Bush’ the title we gave this weekly vlog and in which this Reflection appears in audio. I recall years ago visiting the Monastery where the Burning Bush is said to remain, an Orthodox Monastery that is under threat from the Government today. God called to Moses on Horeb, the mountain of God (Exodus 3) and commissioned him to bring “the children of Israel out of Egypt where they were being ‘oppressed’”. Moses said “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?” God said “I will be with you.” The purpose of our weekly reflection, the Burning Bush, is to hear God speak today and to see what he is calling us to in our time. The celebration of Our Lady of Mount Carmel reminds us that God has spoken to those who listen to him down through the ages. Mount Carmel, like Horeb, is a special place, hailed in the Scriptures for its beauty. Here the Prophet Elijah renewed the Covenant originally made by God with the People of Israel through Moses. In the 12<sup>th</sup> Century some hermits living on Mount Carmel began the Order of Carmelites, with Our Lady as Patron, and according to tradition this was the date when she gave the Scapular to Saint Simon Stock the first General of the Order. I noted today that the Carmelite Sisters in Wolverhampton have posted on X that they are praying for Priestly Vocations on this special Feast. By their life of Prayer they remind us of the importance of listening and learning from God’s Word, the special focus of the Gospel for the 16<sup>th</sup> Sunday (Year C) where Jesus says: “Mary has chosen the good portion, which is not to be taken from her.”

As I made my way to Our Lady and St Michael in Shipston-on-Stour to celebrate mass on Sunday last I was listening to Radio 4 and the News about the burial ground about to be excavated at the Mother and Baby Home in Tuam, Co. Galway. It was run by Bon Secours Sisters and they have admitted the Home was not run in a Christian way at one time! Sadly, the embarrassment of children born-out-of-wedlock was a humiliation that led to Mothers and Babies being hidden away, and when some of the children died they were disposed of rather than given a proper burial and with dignity. It is a far way from how the Church defends life today, thank God, but of course the pagan culture we now live in has taken a different turn – so that abortion is encouraged and unwanted pregnancies can be terminated in legitimate late term death. As Church people we can so easily seek

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compromise. I was preaching last week on “passing by on the other side” as I heard the broadcast on the Mother and Baby Home. Church people and Church authorities have been complicit (in different ways) in letting things go on that are contrary to the Gospel. That is why I have highlighted ‘listening and learning’ after the example of Mary for today’s Reflection.

I have read a most interesting commentary by Rodrigo Guerra entitled ‘The Ongoing Invisibility of Victims’ in the past days. He speaks of the pain of victims of wars and violence being ignored or normalised and speaks of lessons he has learned from a book by Gustavo Gutiérrez titled ‘On Job: God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent’. He writes “I draw several guiding ideas: only by learning to listen to pain and committing ourselves to the victims can we speak from their hope. Only by taking seriously their open wounds, the suffering of the innocent, and living in the light of the mystery of an infinite Love – one that loves the humiliated even to the Cross – can we avoid becoming complicit in the actions of people, groups or ideologies that deny human dignity of the most vulnerable.”

In the case of the Mother and Baby Homes we can see many victims: the children, the Mothers and the sisters! It is only when we stop being so busy like Martha that we can listen to the voice of love, like Mary did and so be free to steer through the choppy waters of the world that we live in. As we commit ourselves to living our Covenant with the Lord Jesus in the Eucharist, let us listen to His voice. We ask Our Lady of Mount Carmel to stand with us on our journey of Faith.

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