



THE ARCHDIOCESE *of* BIRMINGHAM

Office for Ethnic Chaplaincies and Eastern Catholic Churches
Co-ordinator: Monsignor Daniel McHugh

Lighting up Lives

3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time
25 January 2026

Reflection - Mgr Daniel McHugh

“The people that walk in darkness have seen a great light.” (Mt 4:16)

As I write this Reflection I am very conscious that we are in the midst of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. It began on Sunday last, 18th January and will close this coming Sunday 25th. The 18th January was also Peace Sunday, so I was struck by the words of Archbishop Gintaras Grušas, of Vilnius in Lithuania, who said that Prayer for Christian Unity amid conflict worldwide unites Christians to pray for peace. He said, “Prayer remains ‘the soul of the whole ecumenical movement (UR8) and it finds an especially strong expression during the annual octave of prayer for Christian unity’”. I had met Father Grušas many years ago when he was Secretary of the Bishops’ Conference in Lithuania and I was promoting the Catechetical and Theological courses of Maryvale Institute in the countries of Eastern Europe, as



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the Church emerged from the oppression of the Soviet era. Grušas became a Bishop later and then Archbishop before being elected President of the Council of Bishops Conferences of Europe. In this capacity he has stressed Churches are called “to renew a strong common appeal to pray for peace, especially ongoing threats against peace, shaped by persistent armed conflicts and geopolitical tensions in many regions of the world, particularly ahead of the 25th anniversary of the signing of Charta Oecumenica (Ecumenical Charter) in Strasbourg, France, 22 April 2001.

Significantly, in the context of the coming Sunday’s Scriptures, Pope Leo spoke on Monday of this week of people being tempted by hopelessness, and Christians being messengers of Hope to bring the Lord’s light into the darkest corners of the world. The Pope was speaking to an Ecumenical delegation of Lutheran, Orthodox and Catholics at the Vatican. The Pope did just this himself in a very personal way when he met families following the Crans-Montana, Switzerland, fire at the New Year where 40 died and 119 were injured. He told them that Faith could bring light in the very darkest moments, and that Christ was close to them in their sufferings. He went on to encourage them to turn to Our Lady of Sorrows: like Mary at the Foot of the Cross a new day will arrive, he said.

Joseph Pollard in his book of Homilies writes: “In today’s gospel, Matthew says that, with the coming of Jesus, ‘a people living in darkness have seen a great light.’ We are that people, and Jesus is our light. He goes on to say ‘I think we are all a bit confused today about how to find light in the darkness and how to be a light for others, especially for our children... In the religious education of many young people, there are prior issues standing in the way, issues of motivation and



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psychology, of anxiety and depression and drugs, that need the assistance of counselling and therapy”. He continues: “The social environment of our day, especially the one that our teenagers inhabit, is not the traditional environments of the normal life – growth challenges. For so many, it is the new environment of urban anxiety and fear, the environment of threat, bullying and physical danger. It is very difficult for the light of Christ – and your light – to break through such social darkness.”

Pollard began his Reflection saying ‘it’s better to light one candle than to curse the darkness’ – so said Fr Keller, the founder of the Christophers, those Christians who are trying to contribute something positive, however small, to each situation and in each challenge in daily life...”

So, he says, we ask ourselves some questions: “The gospel expects us to see Jesus as a great liberation of light, a liberation from the darkness of the rulers of this world. Do we let his light shine on our Sunday church faces but nowhere else? Christ has light to shine on much else: on our business concerns, our romantic concerns, our driving and drinking concerns, our neighbourhood concerns, even our voting concerns. All things should be done in Christ. All concerns should be measured by Christ. All issues should be illuminated with the light of Christ.”

Pollard concludes: “It all gets back to the Epiphany in my life. Is Jesus still the great light of my life and of my salvation? And, how well am I, in my turn, his light to all in my sphere of influence to all whose present-in-Christ and whose future-with-Christ are mysteriously caught up in my own?”



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The 3rd Sunday of the year in Ordinary Time has been designated the Sunday of Word of God: a Sunday to pause and reflect on the Sacred Scripture and how it impacts on our lives as Christians. As we focus on the Words of Jesus in Gospel this 3rd Sunday may we resolve to follow him anew and experience his words and actions “Lighting up our Lives”.