

## Reflection for 22<sup>nd</sup> Week in Ordinary Time Year B

The Summer Paralympic Games in Tokyo started last Tuesday and will finish on **5<sup>th</sup> September**. This is in sharp contrast to the city of Kabul, where the world is gazing nervously of the plight and safety of its people which is becoming everyday more and more fragile. The Paralympians, who are participating in the games are breaking personal bests and world records in their respective field. The joy on their faces is in sharp contrast to the worry and fear that is so visible on the faces of the citizens of Kabul. Two cities attracting the world's attention but for very different reasons. One tells a story of success, the other of total brokenness and apparent failure. In time, the story of these two cities will be told where one city opened its doors to the world the other effectively closed them. The Church, too, faces similar challenges in different cities throughout the world. It continues to communicate the message of the Gospel on the streets of cities across the globe. Some have been success stories, others have not. There can be a clash of cultures, between faith and society, the sacred and the secular. The doors to the sacred can be opened or closed. It is easy to be anonymous in the city where the voice of faith struggles to be heard and the sacred is confined to the corner of some quiet street. As we slowly emerge from the pandemic, churches in different cities are having to find creative ways to re-engage with society and culture, with people and public life. These are not without their challenges. This will not be an overnight success story. It is going to be a long journey with setbacks along the road. However, the Church will need to discover creative ways for getting back in touch with people and how it can connect with their daily lives. These words by Donald Dorr, an Irish theologian and writer may encourage us to search for a way in these trying times.

“When Pope John Paul talks about the re-evangelization, he is asking us to help people get in touch with the fundamental Christian values which lie buried deep in the culture of countries which in the past were deeply influenced by the Christian faith – values which are no longer very alive or effective for most of the population. His aim is to re-animate elements in the apparently secularized culture which have deep roots in the Christian heritage (e.g. *Redemptoris Missio* 33). This will lead to the transformation of society in the light of the gospel.

We can go further: we must recognize that in the Western world today there are many good people whose cultural roots are not Christian – for instance most of the immigrants and asylum-seekers from Asian countries. We know that the Spirit of God blows where it will, and touches peoples who have had little or no contact with Christianity. Part of our task as evangelizers is to recognize, affirm and help to nourish the good values which animate the lives of these people. In doing so, we are carrying out our mission by promoting the reign of God.

If we do succeed in touching into people's explicitly or implicitly Christian values and bringing these values to life in our society today, it does not necessarily mean that our Catholic Church will be thronged with new converts or newly practising Christians. The more likely outcome is that certain key values of Christianity will begin to seem more relevant to the non-Church going people. This may eventually lead to a trickle of new converts but the main benefit will be in expanding and deepening what I have been calling the penumbra of the church. This is a vital part of re-evangelization – ensuring that these ‘reign of God values’ find a place in the apparently secularized world in which many of our people are living. By helping people to appreciate and live by these values we are ministering to the ‘unchurched’ people all around us. “