

Fr Paul's Reflection. 8th November

Remembrance Sunday, American elections, and a second lockdown for much of Europe are some of the issues that are dominating the news headlines across the world. Closer to home, as we continue to live with the different restrictions that are currently in place across the country, we wait to see if restrictions might be lifted or further imposed. Many people say that they are finding it difficult to plan and are already asking the sensitive question: 'what is Christmas going to be like?' The honest answer for us is that we just do not know. For many, this uncertainty is a challenge and for others it is frightening. Remembrance Sunday recalls those who lost their lives in wartime. However, November is also a time when we remember the faithful departed. You might even say that it is part of our psyche of faith that during the month of November, the Holy Souls are part of lives and memory. Stories of faith are important to us just now, especially when we feel that the world is sitting on a knife edge. Credibility and witness of faith are part of a dynamic creativity that a wounded and broken world is seeking so it can be healed of its pain and brokenness. As many people, particularly in Europe, find that they are, once again, limited to where they can travel, there can be a sense of resignation of if, when and where will life return to some sort of normality. There is no easy answer, as the world continues to be in the eye of the storm of a pandemic. Faith is caught up in a new and unprecedented way with history. This is a new historical moment of faith not simply because of the pandemic but, also in time, how we are going to live our faith after a vaccine may be established and the virus is under control. This, too, has caused many people to reflect and re-evaluate their lives even to the point of perhaps discovering who and what is important in their life. There are many superficial attractions that we have learned on over the last few months that they have probably now run their course. There is a search for something deeper and authentic that can help us get through the uncertainty of these days and weeks. St. John Paul II, when he was Archbishop of Krakow gave a series of reflections on how we might articulate the faith in a culture of scepticism and unbelief. The following words may offer us some hope and comfort for the days ahead:

“What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.” The Apostle of Tarsus, and with him the whole Church, from generation to generation, proclaims Christ. He himself said: “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9) And so the Church proclaims Christ to make the Father better known. And at the same time, it proclaims Christ, because in him the mystery of humankind is fully manifested. Christ “fully reveals man to himself” (Gaudium et Spes 22) These two dimensions of the gospel message are closely linked. In Christ, the human being “sees the Father” and at the same time in Christ the human being meets himself; he discovers the depth of his humanity, and also the full meaning of his existence and calling which is inscribed in the very fact of being human. The time in which Jesus of Nazareth carried out his messianic mission was brief. Those who heard and watched him, and especially those who were with him as disciples and apostles, learned from Christ anew what it meant to be human. The experience reached the peak of its maturity on the day of Pentecost. From the coming of the Paraclete, from the moment in which they were “baptized in the Holy Spirit”, the proclamation of Christ was fulfilled in them: “You will be my witnesses” (Acts 1:8) This proclamation was then fulfilled for generations and generations in all those who “through the word of the Apostles believed in Christ.” (cf. John 17:20; Acts 4:4, 16:7) John Paul II, “Teachings for an unbelieving World: newly discovered reflections on Paul's Sermon at the Areopagus,” pages 85/86

