



Allocutio



Presentata Curia 25th November 2010

Allocutio: There is always hope.

I saw Venus early this morning shining brilliantly and I could not but think of Our Lady. She in a way is like the morning star which reflects so brilliantly the light of Christ, her Sun! If you are up next Saturday week (Dec 4) at 6 o'clock in the morning and if you do see it remember that it is 25 times as bright as Sirius, the next brightest star if we leave the sun out. And I could not help but think that Our Lady is like that, so much brighter than any other saint. The morning star gives hope, a sign that something better is coming. Let us pray in these dark days to her who is Hope of Christians.

The tragic deaths in Ballycotton and Newcastle during the week hit us all hard. I could not but wonder if all the bleak news, added to by the season, was undermining people's confidence and causing depression. But it also seemed to me that everything was in some way a sign that Christ was not the King and had been abandoned. There is a great need for our country to return to Christ and submit to his rule. Because his rule is one of love based above all on his love for us. I am convinced that if people could only get to know him and his love and deepen real faith in him they would not allow the bad news to get to them and undermine them as much as it can. Another reason to pray to her who is hope of Christians. For example, and this is just a few things I notice. I read there during the week that over 270 people died in Indonesia since that Volcano erupted down there. Our local volcano in Iceland grounded aircraft but no one died. In fact I don't think it caused anyone respiratory difficulties. I was thinking of the devastating floods in Pakistan and reflecting that while we had bad floods again last year, still no one drowned. Then I thought of Haiti and its cholera outbreak and that too put things in relief for me. I thought of the malnutrition in other places and thought that no one has yet died of starvation here unless living alone and incapacitated no one visited them.

As some of you know I had a few health wobbles this past year. But I reflected recently how good it is to be able to breathe. Or to see, to walk, to have your normal bodily functions work properly. In other words we would do well to step back and reflect that we have so much to be thankful for. And even if we are to suffer cutbacks well that might not be unhealthy. Perhaps less obesity, less drinking of alcohol, less waste. But let me come back to what I started with, the need to bring back Christ into our lives or maybe for some to discover him for the first time. We need to hear in our inner hearts his love for us and his gentle call to follow him with faith and trust and to let him be our guide and shepherd. For anyone who has taken the gamble of letting him be their Lord and ruler they have found strength and great direction in their lives. He can remain your teacher and tutor irrespective of what government or laws we have to deal with. All we need to do is to turn to him. And to her who is our hope. She can herald the coming of her Son back to our people.

The Gospel last Sunday showed us a thief. We do not know how bad he was. It is worth reflecting that he had not met Jesus before. He turns to Jesus and acknowledges his goodness and takes up his values of fairness and respect for others as he defends Jesus. And he turns to Jesus and makes a humble request yet a mighty one: "Lord, remember me when you come into your Kingdom!" That humble turning to Jesus when he is truly down and nearly out leads to a response that I might have



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trouble believing in, "Today you will be with me in Paradise." Not next year or after 300 years in Purgatory. Today! Turn to Jesus and discover that already today he will be with you and looking after you. I could be discouraged by my own failures. But my leader is a most patient and forgiving Lord who leaves the door open always so that I can repent and like Peter and the other disciples who abandoned him to the Cross come back and start again. And he wants us to believe that no matter what is happening around us nor however we have ourselves gone astray it is the recovery Peter and the other disciples and the good thief made that should inspire us. Judas took the wrong route. There is no need to commit suicide. If only sometimes people could have held on 24 hours more.

And again look at she who is our hope, given as a mother to us on the Cross! Christ's betrayal and death began the Church in a very dark place. That dark place was lit up by his Resurrection. The whole of Christ's message to us is one of hope; his personal word is one of encouragement. With him you never lose hope. With him depression can be overcome. Whether it is events outside or the inner sense of being a failure Christ the King has the medicine of hope for us all. Let us abandon the gloom and the doom and follow him towards a better light. And let us see in Mary the dawn of hope. She, Queen of Ireland, will get us through our dark winter.

Amen.

Fr Paul Churchill