

Reflection from Fr. Colm on the 15th Sunday in Ordinary Time

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Good morning everybody on this 15th Sunday in Ordinary Time. This week has brought us the loss of two wonderful people in the form of Ennio Morricone, the truly great musical genius of screen and Jack Charlton, the football icon of both England and Ireland. I'd love to say more on Morricone for no other reason than I have always loved his music, the music of *The Mission*, *Cinema Paradiso*, *Once Upon a Time in America*, the list is endless, but his music has such a haunting beauty about it and it was with enthusiasm that I listened to *The Last Word* which are obituaries of famous people who have died in the last week every Friday on BBC on an afternoon. However, it was okay, it was interesting enough, but I was disappointed in the comment that one of the observers made that Morricone's Catholicism was not of the conventional sense. Now from my reading and it was certainly from his own words if receiving Holy Communion on a daily basis is not conventional Catholic well then, I think we're all in trouble. More of that later, but however, for now, let's just reflect on Jack, Jack Charlton.

I did meet him very briefly, by accident rather than design and had an equally brief conversation with him. I was travelling from Dublin to Newcastle many years ago, it was just after he had retired as manager of the Republic of Ireland football team. Tall, he just drifted through Dublin airport, a quiet airport on the day and it was fascinating watching, just the reverence and the warmth of which each of the employees be they ground staff, cleaners, restaurant staff greeted him as he passed through. I couldn't miss it because we were going through at the same time. There were many who wanted just to simply say hello Jack and they did. However, at the flight and on the flight, I found myself seated directly in front of him. We were both window seats and nobody seated beside us such was the emptiness of the plane and we went about our respective reading of various newspapers etc he had umpteen papers with him which he had to go through. However, as we approached Newcastle Airport and the flight dipped coming around the seacoast there and into the Northumberland countryside both of us were transfixed by the weather that was shining down on the beauty of the landscape and we were close enough where I could simply say and ask what at the time I felt was an innocent question but it could have been a loaded diplomatic question I said *"Is that countryside as nice as Ireland*

Jack?" and he said with a smile "Yes," he said, "However both are stunningly beautiful and I love them."

These are memories of appreciation of a man and a man's appreciation, both of us appreciating the beauty of God's creation and that's what our readings today are about in appreciating what is there even despite the traumas of our lives and these simple appreciations of life are a constant reminder to us that gratitude is also integral to our own religious practice.

I recall a most influential book on my own life when I was recommended by a delightful elderly lady at the bookstall at the Brompton Oratory where I tried to get down to every day when living in London. A book written by the American Trappist Monk Thomas Merton. The book was called "Seven Storey Mountain" or "Elected Silence" It was written in 1939 just before the Second World War broke out there was tension and foreboding in the air, even in the toughest of cities as Merton said, meaning New York where he lived. On his way to Mass for that first Friday of September in 1939 Merton had not yet decided on priesthood when then he heard the news that German planes had bombed Warsaw. But what struck him about the High Mass he was attending were the words sung by the priest then in Latin. "*Vere dignum et iustum aequum et salutare, nos tibi semper et ubique gratias agere*" "*Always and everywhere to give you thanks.*" These are the words we utter today and no doubt many of you on live streaming Masses this morning right across the world will hear those same words "*Always and everywhere to give you thanks.*" This is the central prayer of the central act of the Church, it's always one of thanksgiving, even in dire situations, yes no matter how personal the tragedies are and some can be dreadful and yes also dare I say even in Lockdown and Coronavirus.

These words go back to the Last Supper and the words of Jesus "*Do this in memory of Me.*" Eucharist means precisely that - thanksgiving. Today's readings almost implore us, almost beg us to just take stock, take a breath, stand back, look at the beauty of our world and of creation as in those brief moments in that flight from Dublin to Newcastle and those resonating on the worldwide and I say rezoning and checking in on worldwide webcams for your Masses in union we can just express our own gratitude.

And as a Dutch White Father said: *"We live as those who have eyes and see not, those who have ears and hear not, not only as far as God is concerned but even as far as the people around us are concerned."* Jesus is gently reminding us today do try and be more attentive to what is good in life. Good morning.