

Reflection from Fr. Colm on the 1st Sunday of Advent

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Hello everybody, first Sunday of Advent the readings today very optimistic, hopeful, expectant as you would expect but it's the second reading of St Paul's first letter to the Corinthians that I'm going to start with. He tells us *"I never stop thanking God for all the graces you have received through Jesus Christ. I thank him that you have been enriched in so many ways,"* so twice Paul is mentioning gratitude here. Meister Eckhart said that the great Dominican theologian of the middle ages said that if the one prayer that you say in your entire life is thank you, that is enough.

Reminded of that with someone I met recently a lovely guy he's a front line worker and always in a positive state of mind, wanting to engage, quite humorous and unapologetic about telling me about his addiction in the past to cocaine. Now cocaine is a drug that is probably the most commonly used drug in the western world anyhow it's certainly fed by the drug barons in South America and there's a flourishing market. He was telling me that he'd lost everything. Family, friends, house, every possession he had, and I said to him how did you get off it? He said I just made a decision. One day I made a decision and I thank God every morning and every evening but particularly every day I get up I thank God that I'm off it. And I was expecting as I chatted with him that perhaps he might have been a Born Again Christian, and if you meet a Born Again Christian you can expect that they're going to really fire on all cylinders and the relevance of certain Biblical passages no he didn't go there at all he simply said thank you every day, thank you, God.

Perhaps it's a sense of gratitude we need to develop over these coming weeks, a sense of gratitude for who we are, where we are, even though we're in lockdown and we're hugely restricted. Compare that with the tragic news this week of the death of perhaps the greatest footballer that ever-lived Diego Maradona. I've read so much about his life, I've watched documentaries, films on his life, what a complex, extraordinary genius born into extreme poverty in the location where he comes from in Buenos Aires to this day is a dangerous area to go in, taxi drivers won't even go in. But who's who in both football and beyond have all commented with gratitude on the life of Diego Maradona every one of them have all spoken with gratitude for the gift of his artistry. Sadly, he

did succumb to cocaine he had huge drug dependencies, alcohol especially and they took him in the end but his short life was one of giftedness to those who had the privilege of seeing him.

So, we're seeing two angles, someone whose come through it and someone who hasn't. Someone who's come through an ordeal like that with extraordinary strength and courage and being able to say with gratitude. So next time we feel rather negative and wanting to blame and wanting to criticise, feeling that our life has been turned upside down because of Covid perhaps we need to just say thank you if we can. Not always easy to do that, of course, it's not but it's a habit-forming thing and it seems St Paul certainly got into that habit, certainly, my friend who spoke to me there recently on his release from addiction, to an addiction of saying just thank you, is important okay.