

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost 17 September 2017

“But fear seized upon all, and they began to glorify God, saying, ‘A great prophet has arisen among us,’ and ‘God has visited his people.’”

Lk. 7:16

Today’s liturgy is dominated by the Gospel in which Jesus Christ, who is *“the resurrection and the life”* Jn. 11:25 raises the widow’s son from the dead. This is the same Jesus who appears on our altars, gives us life and raises us from the dead. **“It is important to stress this connection between the Gospel and the altar, because it is all very well to think of the Gospel as history in which we are taught divine truths which unite us to God. But there is more to it than that; we must love the Gospel by means of its mystical significance. When the Church chooses a passage of the Gospel to include in the Mass, she does so with the idea that, not only will it reveal certain facts to us about our religion, but also so that, through the whole sacrifice, sacraments, and prayers of the liturgy, we shall draw abundant fruit for our souls. We shall begin to live what we have heard.”** *The Preacher’s Encyclopaedia, Twelfth to Last Sundays after Pentecost*, p. 152 In today’s Epistle (Gal. 5:25-26; 6: 1-10) St. Paul again emphasizes, as we saw in the Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost, the conflict between the flesh and the spirit: **“For what a man sows, he will reap. For he who sows in the flesh also will reap corruption. But he who sows in the spirit will reap life everlasting.”** Gal. 5: 8 The one hope that we all have is seen in today’s Gospel (Lk. 7:11-16) where Jesus raises **“the only son of his mother”** Lk. 7:12 in the town of Naim (means beautiful, delightful, pleasing). Here we see the theme that runs through today’s liturgy: **“Whatever good there is in us is the fruit of His grace...Without Jesus we would abide in death; without Him we could never live the glorious life of the Spirit described by St. Paul in today’s Epistle.”** Fr. Gabriel of St. Magdalen, OCD, *Divine Intimacy*, p. 880

“...he who sows in the spirit will reap life everlasting.” Ga. 5: 8

Dom Prosper Gueranger in his book, *The Liturgical Life, Vol. 13* comments on the spiritual life produced in our souls by the Holy Spirit:

“When the flesh has been subdued, we must beware of supposing that the structure of our perfection is completed. Not only must the combat be kept up after the victory, under penalty of losing all we have won, but we must also be on the watch, lest one or other of the heads of the triple concupiscence (the world, the flesh and the devil) take advantage of the soul’s efforts being elsewhere directed to raise itself against us, and sting us all the more terribly, because it is left to do just as it pleases. The apostle warns us here of vain-glory, and well he may; for vain-glory is, more than other enemies always in a menacing attitude ready to infuse its subtle poison even into acts of humility and penance...Would to God we could ever have ringing in our ears the saying of the apostle: **“Whilst we have time, let us work good to all men” Gal. 6:10 ...Then will man reap with joy what he shall have sown in tears (cf Ps. 125:5); he failed not, he grew not weary of doing good while in the dreary land of his exile; still less will he ever tire of the everlasting harvest which is to be in the living light of the eternal day.”** Gueranger, p. 346, 348 & 349) **“... he who sows in the spirit will reap life everlasting.”** Ga. 5: 8

Jesus is our only Life

“The thought that Jesus is our Life shines forth even more in the Gospel. The Master meets the sad funeral procession of a young man. His mother is walking beside the bier, weeping. *‘And the Lord, seeing her, had compassion on her, and said to her: ‘Weep not.’ And he came near and touched the bier... And He said: ‘Young man, I say to thee, arise...’ And He gave him to his mother.*” (Lk. 7:13-4) Fr. Gabriel, p. 881 Jesus not only restores the son to life, but, in *The Commentary on the Gospel of Luke According to Cornelius a Lapide*, He also restores the souls of all sinners to the life of grace: **“Allegorically, the widow is the Church, who mourns her dead sons—that is Christians who through mortal sin have been deprived of God’s grace, which is life, as it were, the soul of the soul—and by her tears begs forgiveness for them and the life of grace. Therefore, Christ 1. Halts the funeral procession, i.e., checks and restrains those passions which gain mastery over the young, so that the sinner may no longer follow them. 2. Touches the bier, i.e., the wood of the cross, sinners are moved by God to repentance and filled with grace. Hence, 3. The dead man sits up**

and begins to speak, i.e., begins to do good and to praise God, so that astonishment seizes all those who witness such a great and godly change and they glorify God with one voice. So St. Ambrose, Euthymius, Theophylact, and Bede (*in loco*), as St. Augustine (*serm. 44 de Verbis Domini*) also comment. We have a living example of this in St. Monica, who as a widow mourned unceasingly for her son, Augustine, who was dead in heresy and wantonness, and she recalled him by her prayers and tears to such holiness of life that he became an eminent doctor of the Church, as he himself relates in his *Confessions*. Again, more particularly, the widow is the Church, the son—the people of the gentiles barred by the plank of concupiscence—and as the wood which brought death and to which it has grown accustomed—and as it were enclosed in bier, i.e., by the wood of the cross, Christ restored to life.” a Lapide, p. 377.

The miracle of the soul's conversion

In another spiritual interpretation of this miracle (tropologically), from a moral point of view, Cornelius a Lapide sees how pastors of the Church should act towards sinners: **“Tropologically, in the example of this widow we see how a pastor or a rector or a confessor should act when any of his weak spiritual children should happen to fall into mortal sin and are being borne to the grave of everlasting despair. He should follow the funeral procession with his fellow citizens, i.e., with weeping, wailing, and much lamentation, for thus his soul will receive comfort from the Lord who: 1. Touching the bier will cause the pallbearers to stand still, i.e., will put an end to lusts; 2. Will recall the dead to life; and 3. Will raise him up to the practice of the virtues, so that he may speak and confess his sins and proclaim the loving kindness of God. Thus at last he is restored to the Church, his mother, whose past sorrow will be eclipsed by her present joy, and thus also many will marvel and be led to extol the goodness of God.”** A Lapide, p. 337-8.

Spiritual Meaning of Jesus' Miracles

Cornelius a Lapide sees in the three people whom Jesus raised from the dead a spiritual (moral or tropological) significance. **“We read that Christ raised three people to life. 1. The daughter of the ruler of the synagogue in the house, i.e. one who sins in thoughts and**

intention. 2. The son of the widow at the gate, i.e. one who manifests his sinful intention in words, and misleads others. 3. Lazarus in the tomb, i.e. the consummate sinner who by repeating an action has contracted the habit of sin, so that he lies as it were buried in sin without hope of salvation or resurrection. The first, Christ raised to life by secret prayer apart from others; the second by a command; the third by crying with a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come forth.’ Jn. 11:43 This is because a sin in thought only is easily cured; more difficult is a sin in speech; and the most difficult is the sin that is actually and repeatedly committed, in which a person lies as though asleep, indeed as though dead and buried. Hence it is necessary for Christ to cry aloud in a mighty voice to the sinner's heart, so that he may come to his senses.” a Lapide, p. 378 In Jesus' three miracles of raising the dead, there is also a spiritual meaning of the increased seriousness of sins of the thought, word and deed.

“If anyone eat of this bread, he will live forever;...” Jn. 6:51

How blessed we are when we come to Holy Mass and receive the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist. Jesus comes to give us life everlasting. He promised us this when He said: ***“I am the living bread that has come down from heaven. If anyone eat of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of world.”*** Jn. 6: 51-2 This is one of Jesus' most important revelations; He promises us life everlasting when we come to receive His Body and Blood in the Holy Eucharist at Mass. Even if we are spiritually dead through mortal sin, He will raise us up, like He did with the only son of widow of Naim, by forgiving our sins in the sacrament of Penance through the priests of His Church. How blessed are those who live in the Spirit of Jesus Christ for they will have life everlasting.