

New Brighton, Sunday 1st September 2024

15th Sunday after Pentecost

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.

“In doing good let us not grow tired; for in due time we shall reap if we do not relax¹.”

The well-known miracle of Jesus that we just read in the Gospel, the resurrection of the son of the widow, is a direct application of this small sentence, excerpt from the epistle of St Paul to the Galatians. As we read today's Gospel, the evangelist presents the story to our contemplation in such way, that we could read it the following human way: Jesus didn't plan to perform this miracle, but jumped on the occasion to console the mourning widow.

“Jesus went to a town called Naim; and His disciples and a large crowd went with Him. And as He drew near the gate of the town, behold, a dead man was being carried out².”

Of course, being God, Jesus had perfect knowledge of what he was about to do. But He also wanted His life on earth to be a perfect example for us all. Therefore, the story of the son of the widow appears to be an excellent example of the practice of charity: Don't search special things difficult or far away, but just look around you, and jump on occasions as they come: and we receive so many daily.

You would say to me: how should I recognise them? How should I take them as they happen? Just look carefully around you, outside of this selfish shell that you built in your pride to pretend to protect you. The need for your charity around you is everywhere, and definitely not only is giving money to good causes. Almsgiving is a necessary but small part of the virtue of Charity.

Most of the time, the practice of Charity will be in your behaviour, supporting with a heroic patience the small defect that you see in everyone around you, paying attention to the straw in their eye, and not to the beam in yours. If everyone was charitably fighting to be more charitable towards his neighbour, than this same neighbour is battling to be towards you, many horrible and terrible things would be avoided, and a real Christian society would be installed. Remember the mark of the first Christians: “See how they love one another³”.

“Not one of us is exempt from infirmities and effects. Even souls who sincerely seek God, who are very near to Him, who are the object of His particular favour, keep their limitations and imperfections. God leave them these miseries, say Saint Gregory, in order that these souls may always be kept humble. To be astonished at the presence of these frailty betrays a lack of experience. We

¹ Gal., 6,

² Lk., 7, 11-12.

³ 1 Pet., 1, 22.

show that we are still imperfect if we are troubled by them. It belongs only to saints to understand all miseries and to compassionate them. All defects may also be accentuated by the lack of education, by bad habits, or aggravated by the painful train of infirmities that age brings with it. They may be born of natural antipathy. The very presence of a person may be sometimes sufficient to cause annoyance, or even aversion.

Now what will throw of a veil over all this? What will prevent coldness from gaining the heart, and repugnance from manifesting itself outwardly? The warmth of charity. Indeed, charity alone will bring about this marvel of causing us to overcome nature and to love all our brethren as we find them.

[...] We shall find in Saint Benedict an admirable example of the condescension and patience [of God]. His great soul arrived at the perfect holiness, and so near to God overflowed with indulgence and compassion. [...] What astonishing indulgence the Holy Patriarch manifests in regard to delinquents. He's not scandalised, he's not angry. Like a kind physician, it does all he can to save them and to console the wavering and troubled culprit. 'Lest it be overwhelmed with excess of grief'.⁵"

Let's follow the example of St Benedict, patron saint of our Institute, in the practice of Divine Charity. Let's never our anger and wicked passions overcome our desire to fulfil God's command: You shall love thy neighbour as thyself. Let's not even miss an occasion to increase our virtue of charity in doing something for him through our prayer and our actions: Charity goes over everything, and is never false. We might not see the immediate result, but we will receive an eternal and imperishable reward, as St Paul taught us this morning:

"He who sows in the spirit, from the spirit will reap life everlasting. And in doing good let us not grow tired; for in due time we shall reap if we do not relax. Therefore, while we have time, let us do good to all men, but especially to those who are of the household of faith⁶."

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.

⁴ *Rule*, chp. 27.

⁵ Dom Marmion, *Christ, the ideal of the monk*, Chp. 17, "Good Zeal", III.

⁶ Gal., 6, 9-10.