

## SPIRITUAL LIFE

### Tenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

By: Fr. McAllister

Jesus in his public ministry performed many miracles including countless healings. These miracles showed his deep compassion for the people especially towards those who suffer. The miracles also revealed his divine power and authority.

Comparatively few of these healings are actually recorded in the Gospels but we know that there were many others. I am sure that his reputation as a healer and miracle worker was one of the reasons why so many people gathered to see Jesus when he was passing through the villages of Galilee.

It says in the opening line of today's Gospel that when he entered the town of Nain he was accompanied by his disciples and a great number of people. These large crowds had gathered to see Jesus; they surely expected a miracle and they were not disappointed.

But the miracle he actually performed that day was something exceptional; it was no mere healing, for the young man in question was already dead and was even being taken out for burial. Moved with compassion Jesus returns the boy to his mother. No wonder St Luke tells us that everyone was filled with awe; there could be no more spectacular proof of Jesus' power than this, to raise a dead man to life.

The editors of Lectionary have paired up this particular Gospel text with the account from the Book of Kings where Elijah revives the son of the widow with whom he is lodging. This is also a case of bringing a boy back to life because as it says he had no breath left in him.

The parallels are even stronger when we observe that in both cases we are talking about the son of a widow. We remember that a widow had very little status in society at that time and because of this her only hope was her son. Without a son to support her the widow was faced with a life of destitution.

For a woman to lose her husband was bad enough but then for her to lose an only son was catastrophe indeed. This brings an extra depth to the compassion and sorrow that Jesus felt for the widow of Nain. This was not just a terrible bereavement and deep personal loss but a severe economic and social blow.

As we have noted, only a few of the healings Jesus performed are recorded in the Gospels; but there are plenty of indications that he performed many hundreds of healings. Those that are recorded are usually because they had some special significance. Here of course Jesus raises the widow's son from the dead, as he was also to do with his friend Lazarus who had already been in the tomb three days.

The special significance is, of course, the connection with his own resurrection from the dead. Only a prophet as powerful as Elijah was able to restore a child from the brink of death, but here was someone who could tell a young man being taken to his burial to get up. If the widow was able to say to Elijah, now I know you are a man of God and word of the Lord in your mouth is truth itself, how much more could this be said of Jesus.

This power to heal and restore to life is recognized by the people as a sign that he truly is a man of God and that his words and deeds come from God himself. As they say, God has visited his people. And this opinion of him spread throughout Judea and all over the countryside.

These miracles are not only a sign of the presence of the Lord in their midst but they are a sign of what it is that Jesus has come to bring-salvation.

The word salvation means to save, to be healed of all that afflicts us especially sin, to be cleansed and made whole, to be redeemed, to be made fit for heaven.

This is what Jesus comes on earth to achieve, the salvation of the living and the dead: to effect reconciliation between God and mankind, to enable us to enter into eternal life.

The restoration by Jesus of individuals to life or to full health is a kind of foretaste of what he is to achieve on the Cross of Calvary and from out of the empty tomb. This is the way of God acts in the world; he is a loving God, a healing God, a saving God. He wishes us no harm but rather wants our well being in the fullest way possible.

We know from the scripture that Christ spent a lot of time ministering to the sick but we know too that this time was not entirely taken up with healings for he also had a mission to teach and to explain his Gospel of love to the people. The many parables and teachings that have been handed down to us today and are the source of the hope we have for the Church and for the world.

But even his teachings are not without a healing aspect for listening to his Gospel we constantly find hope and solace. As we come to an ever-deeper appreciation of the Gospel we discover that it brings peace and tranquility to our lives.

The Gospel is Christ's saving message, his healing words which change our lives and our hearts and brings balm to our souls

## READINGS OF THE WEEK

1 Kings 17:17-24

Galatians 1:1-19

Luke 7:11-17

June 9, 2013

# 靈 修 生 活

## 慈 母 教 會

張 春 申 神 父

聖師奧斯定主教，已經把今天福音中那位寡婦，象徵性地看作教會。寡婦的獨生子死了，耶穌使他復活交給他的母親；教會卻有許多急需救恩的兒女，她在等待基督的援助。所以今天的福音，促使我們默想常聽到的一個名稱：「慈母教會」。

教會之所以稱為母親，這與舊約的歷史有關。舊約中天主與以色列民族之間的盟約，在較後的先知文學中，已經進一步以婚約來描寫。這並非由於舊約信仰中對天主有錯誤的性別概念，而只是應用人間經驗來說明天主對於選民的愛情。因此以色列民族稱為天主的配偶。再由這個象徵，自然地又將代表以色列民族的聖城耶路撒冷稱為母親，因此所有天主子民都是這個民族的子女。到了新約時代，舊約的象徵，幾乎平行地應用在耶穌與祂的教會之間。保祿在厄弗所書信中，便是以丈夫與妻子的圖像來說明基督與教會的關係。於是教會稱為耶穌基督的淨配，所以基督信徒自然稱她為母親。這一切恐怕再也沒有比新約最後一部書：默示錄中，更加豐富的描繪出來了。這樣，「慈母教會」成了大家樂於應用的稱呼，這也是梵二大公會議教會憲章中特別提出的。這個名稱一方面推動我們瞻仰教會的母親面貌，另一方面要求我們顯出自己兒女的情懷；當然這都不是情感主義的描寫，而是該出自信仰的解釋。

母親懷孕、生產、撫養、培育兒女；即使成長的兒女始終是她關懷的對象。那麼教友的信仰的生命，的確是在母親教會的懷中，經歷成長過程，教會在慕道與望教階段懷孕未來的信徒；傳播天主聖言的種籽，發出信仰的苗芽。在聖洗聖事的水裏，教會把自己初生的兒女洗濯。從此，在教會團體中，信友與其他兄弟姊妹，繼續接受聖言與聖事的食糧。漸漸地，在教會聖統的領導下，基督信徒茁長強壯，偕同母親教會，實踐基督的使命。

總之，「慈母教會」稱號，的確表達出了她對信友來自基督的生命，具有母親的面貌，不過所謂懷孕、生產、撫養、培育並非抽象的行為，而是由教會中負有職務的人員具體實踐出來的。因此，這個名號對於那些負有職務的人，如同教宗、主教、司鐸、修士修女與傳教員，具有極大的要求。他們必須以「慈母」的態度完成自己的職責；的確，有時教會也能失去「慈母」的面貌，令人望而生畏而再也不想接近她。

另一方面，「慈母教會」名稱，不能不喚起所有基督信徒的兒女情懷。兒女對於「慈母教會」的基本態度是孝愛。教友具體實踐孝愛的機會非常之多。孝愛是聽從教會的訓誨、是跟隨她在禮儀中朝拜天父、是遵守她的命令。孝愛是當「慈母教會」需要幫助時，不論精神的、或者物質的，教友慷慨地盡其所能支援。孝愛是保護教會、基督信徒作為慈母教會的子女，不容別人侮辱母親教會。因此他們首先生活聖言，不容別人由於自己的敗壞，責備教會。其次，他們還會以言以行，為慈母教會解釋她的言論；支持她的立場。總之，孝愛教會的信友，隨時會想起自己的母親。

聖師奧斯定對今天福音的註解，象徵性地引起我們想到「慈母教會」，不過福音中耶穌基督對那個獨生子母親的憐憫，怎樣能夠使我們不再肯定教會是祂的淨配呢？

摘自「妙音送長風」

## 本 週 讀 經

二零一三年六月九日

列上:17:17-24；迦1:11-19；路7:11-17