

Readings for the 15th Sunday after Pentecost

Ave Maria Catholic Church – Extraordinary Form

Galatians 5: 25, 26; 6: 1-10

Brethren, if we live in the Spirit, let us also follow the Spirit. Let us not be conceited, provoking one another, envious of one another. Brothers, even if a person is caught in some transgression, you who are spiritual should correct that one in a gentle spirit, looking to yourself, so that you also may not be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so you will fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he is deluding himself. Each one must examine his own work, and then he will have reason to boast with regard to himself alone, and not with regard to someone else; for each will bear his own load. One who is being instructed in the word should share all good things with his instructor. Make no mistake: God is not mocked, for a person will reap only what he sows, because the one who sows for his flesh will reap corruption from the flesh, but the one who sows for the spirit will reap eternal life from the spirit. Let us not grow tired of doing good, for in due time we shall reap our harvest, if we do not give up. So then, while we have the opportunity, let us do good to all, but especially to those who belong to the family of the faith.

Luke 7: 11-16

At that time, Jesus journeyed to a city called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd accompanied him. As he drew near to the gate of the city, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. A large crowd from the city was with her. When the Lord saw her, he was moved with pity for her and said to her, "Do not weep." He stepped forward and touched the coffin; at this the bearers halted, and he said, "Young man, I tell you, arise!" The dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother. Fear seized them all, and they glorified God, exclaiming, "A great prophet has arisen in our midst," and "God has visited his people."

Let Us Not Grow Tired of Doing Good

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost – Galatians 5: 25, 26; 6: 1-10 / Luke 7: 11-16

Ave Maria Catholic Church, September 1, 2024 – Fr. David M. Vidal

In the Epistle, the Apostle invites us to live in the Spirit and follow the Spirit, to examine our own works, and to consider what we sow in life. Why is this deliberation so important? Because if we sow in the Spirit, we will reap eternal life, but if we sow in the flesh, we will reap corruption.

God is the *Creator*, the *Giver of Life*; God is the *Redeemer* in His Son, who became flesh for our salvation and died for us on the Cross; and God is the Sanctifier in the Holy Spirit, who is the Author of sanctity and aligns us with Christ.

Unfortunately, human history shows that the action of God meets with the opposition of our human weakness.

And this opposition becomes rebellion because of that sin which takes possession of the human heart. Using the words of Saint Paul: “*The desires of the flesh are against the spirit and the desires of the spirit are against the flesh*” (Gal 5:17).

In every human being there is a natural conflict between *body* and *spirit*. We are not only flesh and bones and we are not purely spiritual either, like angels are. We have a body and a spiritual soul. Therefore, we share some aspects proper to material creatures and other aspects proper to spiritual creatures. However, according to God’s plan of creation, *body* and *spiritual soul* are perfectly united in the human being, even though the conflict remains because the soul is not material and the body is not spiritual.

After original sin, this natural tension becomes a struggle, a battle of tendencies between the “*spirit*” and the “*flesh*.” And this struggle is a consequence of sin and, at the same time, a confirmation of the presence of sin. Then, this struggle becomes part of the everyday experience.

Saint Paul presents the struggle with these words: “*Now the works of the flesh are plain: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, drunkenness, revelry.*” And he adds: “*Enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, envy.*” (See Gal 5:19-21). These are the “*works of the flesh.*”

But to the works of the flesh that are evil St. Paul contrasts “*the fruits of the Spirit,*” such as “*love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control*” (Gal 5:22f.).

In the passage of the Epistle of this Sunday’s liturgy, the Apostle encourages us to live in the Spirit and follow the Spirit, which also means to reject the works of the flesh.

The task is not easy; however, it is not impossible. God calls us to live a life of sanctity. For this reason, the Apostle encourages us with this fundamental truth: *“We should not grow tired.”*

We should not grow tired because it could cost us our lives. We are in a warfare; this is evident. If we were not, why would St. Paul give us recommendations such as: *“Put on the armor of God, that you may be able to resist on the evil day and, having done everything, to hold your ground. So stand fast with your loins girded in truth, clothed with righteousness as a breastplate, and your feet shod in readiness for the gospel of peace. In all circumstances, hold faith as a shield, to quench all [the] flaming arrows of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God”* (Ef 6: 13-17). When the reward is life and the defeat is death, there is no room for growing tired. We must hold the spiritual weapons and face the fight with courage.

We must not grow tired because it may not only cost our lives but also the lives of others. Let us remember how Moses prayed for the people of Israel in their battle against Amalek: *“Moses said to Joshua, ‘Choose some men for us, and tomorrow go out and engage Amalek in battle. I will be standing on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand.’ Joshua did as Moses told him: he engaged Amalek in battle while Moses, Aaron, and Hur climbed to the top of the hill. As long as Moses kept his hands raised up, Israel had the better of the fight, but when he let his hands rest, Amalek had the better of the fight,”* (Ex 17: 9-11).

However, Moses' hands grew tired. For that reason, Aaron and Hur took a rock and put it under Moses, and Moses sat on it. Meanwhile, Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side and one on the other, so that his hands remained steady until sunset. Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the sword. We must not grow weary, not just for our own good but for the good of so many other people who need our assistance.

There is another important message in this story of Moses. In some ways, tiredness is almost inevitable. No human being is so powerful that he or she can avoid the experience of exhaustion. However, we must learn to support each other in the fight so that through this mutual assistance, we might persevere until the Lord completes his work.

We are human beings. Even Moses grew weary. True, each of us grows weary. However, we must not despair. We are not alone; we are part of a Body! We are members of the Body of Christ, the Church, whose arms are raised day and night to heaven, thanks to the presence of the Risen Christ, the Eternal High Priest. Only in the Church, and thanks to the Church's prayer, can we remain steadfast in faith. In the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, Jesus raises his hands in intercession and unites us to his victory. Through the Sacraments of the Church, we participate in the triumph of Christ and receive spiritual life.

Let us pray for perseverance in our daily struggles while we fight the good fight for eternal life. Saint Manuel Gonzalez, bishop of Palencia, Spain, canonized in 2016, left us this prayer to the Blessed Mother:

Mother Immaculate! May we not grow tired! Blessed Mother! One request: may we not grow weary. Yes, even though frustration for little success or the ingratitude of men may overcome us, our weaknesses may soften us, and the fury of the enemy may persecute and calumniate us; even though we may lack financial means and human support, and our works might collapse to the point that we have to start again. Beloved Mother, may we not grow weary!

Steadfast, determined, encouraged, and always content, with the gaze of our eyes directed to our neighbor and their necessities to assist them, and with the eyes of our souls fixed on the Heart of Jesus who is in the Tabernacle, let us take our post, that one that was given to us by God.

Nothing of turning back! Nothing of crossing our arms! Nothing of sterile cries!

While there is still a drop of blood to shed, a few coins to give away, and a little energy to spend, a word to say, some breath in our hearts, some strength in our hands and feet to give glory to God and you, my Mother, and in this way to do some good to my brethren.

My Mother, this is my final request! To die before growing tired!