

9th Sunday after Pentecost, 2007

St Martha

“Our God is our refuge and strength: a helper in troubles.”
(Ps. 45)

The opening words of Psalm 45 remind us of the prayer that Pope Leo XIII gave us in the prayers after Mass; we hear it, and indeed pray it, so often. The words of that Psalm continue, in the second verse: “Therefore we will not fear, when the earth shall be troubled; and the mountains shall be removed into the heart of the sea.” Pope John Paul II repeatedly admonished all of us and the peoples of the world, “Do not be afraid.” Throughout his long pontificate he must have observed the warning signs which have been all too visible to mankind as a whole, especially in this third

millennium — but to the faithful, to those who lead godly lives to the best of their ability, those signs need cause no fear. “Do not be afraid” — it was this message that brought young people in their millions to listen to his teachings. And we must bear in mind the words Christ spoke to those who showed fear from time to time — “O ye of little faith!” And does not St John in the sacred scripture tell us: “Faith casteth out fear.”



Recently I came across this quotation from Hilaire Belloc, a strong, devout Catholic who devoted so much of his writings to the fight for truth, and for the Church. It is headed *The New Paganism* and was written in 1931:

“Our civilisation developed as a Catholic civilisation. It developed and matured as a Catholic thing. With the loss of the Faith it will slip back not only into Paganism, but into barbarism with the accompaniments of Paganism, and especially the institution of slavery. It will find gods to worship, but they will be evil gods as were those of the older savage Paganism before it began its advance towards Catholicism. The road downhill is the same as the road up the hill. It is the same road; but to go down back into the

marshes again is a very different thing from coming up from the marshes into pure air. All things return to their origin. A living organic being, whether a human body or a whole state of society, turns at last into its original elements if life be not maintained in it. But in that process of return there is a phase of corruption which is very unpleasant. That phase the modern world outside the Catholic Church has arrived at.

“Men do not live long without gods; but when the gods of the New Paganism come they will not be merely insufficient, as were the gods of Greece, nor merely false; they will be evil. One might put it in a sentence, and say that the New Paganism, foolishly expecting satisfaction, will fall, before it knows where it is, into Satanism.”

One has only to look at our own country to-day to witness the most alarming falling away from Christian moral standards; the Commandments of God; the teachings of Jesus Christ. When we look at Britain and other countries throughout the world we can easily recognise in the natural disasters the chastisements of God which, in His love for mankind, He sends so that mankind will correct the multitude of evils and the “life-styles” arising from them that are widespread in our present-day world. In the Gospel we see Jesus weeping over Jerusalem; and we hear those ominous words: “but now they are hidden from thine eyes.” This refers to the spiritual darkness that has descended upon a people who from Moses and the Prophets were given every means by which they could recognise the Saviour; yet they do not recognise the presence of the God-sent Messiah, the Anointed One, the Christ. We see the result of that spiritual darkness when Christ stands before Pilate; and Pilate asks the Jews: “Shall I crucify your King?” — and the High priest leads the people in the cry: “We have no king but Caesar!” We have Moses and all the Prophets; but we have more besides: we have the Church which is the teaching voice of Christ; we have the Sacraments — the Holy Eucharist: and the merciful Sacrament of Penance. Yet do we recognise the presence of Christ dwelling among us?

The Encyclical Letter *Ecclesia De Eucharistia* was addressed by the Vicar of Christ – Shepherd and Teacher of all the faithful – to the Bishops, Priests and Deacons, Men and Women in the Consecrated Life and All The Lay Faithful, on the Eucharist in its relationship to the Church. From the very introduction it is most striking. “The Church draws her life from the Eucharist. This truth does not simply express a daily experience of faith, but recapitulates “the heart of the mystery of the Church.” In a variety of ways she joyfully experiences the constant fulfilment of the promise, “Lo, I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world. ”, but in the Holy Eucharist, through changing of bread and wine into the body and blood of the Lord, she rejoices in this presence with unique intensity. Ever since Pentecost, when the Church, the People of the New Covenant, began her pilgrim journey towards her heavenly homeland, the Divine Sacrament has continued to mark the passing of her days, filling them with confident hope. The Second Vatican Council rightly proclaimed that the Eucharistic Sacrifice is “the source and summit of the Christian Life. For the most holy Eucharist contains the Church’s entire spiritual wealth: Christ Himself, our Passover and living bread. Through His own flesh, now made living and life-giving by the Holy Spirit, He offers life to men. Consequently the gaze of the Church is constantly turned to her Lord, present in the Sacrament of the Altar, in which she discovers the full manifestation of his boundless love.”

Let us look deeply into our hearts and honestly answer the question: Is our gaze constantly turned to our Lord? Are we ever aware of his boundless love in our regard? Do we recognise His presence wherever it may be found, at all times and in all places? Let us beg our blessed Mother to obtain for us an immense increase of love through which we may be made to ask of God only what pleases Him.