

10th Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle C

Note: Where a Scripture text is underlined in the body of this discussion, it is recommended that the reader look up and read that passage.

1st Reading - 1 Kings 17:17-24

We are all familiar with the story of the 32-year drought which God brought upon the land during the reign of King Ahab; a drought which was predicted (prophesied) by Elijah. And how, during the drought, Elijah went to Zarephthah where he encountered the widow and her son, the widow having only a handful of flour and little oil in her jug; how, upon assurances from Elijah that God would provide, she shared her meager food with him and the jar of flour and the jug of oil sustained the three of them for a year. Our reading for today comes from this account; it's, as Paul Harvey used to say, "the rest of the story."

17 [T]he son of the mistress of the house fell sick, and his sickness grew more severe until he stopped breathing. 18 So she said to Elijah, "Why have you done this to me, O man of God? Have you come to me to call attention to my guilt and to kill my son?"

The widow interprets her son's death as a punishment for her sins, the existence of which have been brought to God's attention by the presence of the "man of God" in her home. This mentality of punishment for sins prevailed even into New Testament times (see John 9:2).

19 "Give me your son," Elijah said to her. Taking him from her lap, he carried him to the upper room where he was staying, and laid him on his own bed. 20 He called out to the LORD: "O LORD, my God, will you afflict even the widow with whom I am staying by killing her son?" 21 Then he stretched himself out upon the child three times and called out to the LORD: "O LORD, my God, let the life breath return to the body of this child."

This same procedure is used by Saint Paul in Acts 20:9-10 to restore the life of the young man, Eutychus. The prophet Elisha also employs a similar rite of resuscitation in 2 Kings 4:34-35.

22 The LORD heard the prayer of Elijah; the life breath returned to the child's body and he revived. 23 Taking the child, Elijah brought him down into the house from the upper room and gave him to his mother. "See!" Elijah said to her, "your son is alive." 24 "Now indeed I know that you are a man of God," the woman replied to Elijah. "The word of the LORD comes truly from your mouth."

2nd Reading - Galatians 1:11-19

Last week (9th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle C) we looked a bit into the

background of what caused Saint Paul to write this letter to the Galatians. He has been accused of not being a true apostle by Judaizers who are attempting to undermine his authority to teach the gospel. Saint Paul defends his position as an apostle by stressing the new-found freedom which a Christian possesses as compared to the Law of Moses. This week we continue with Saint Paul's defense.

11 Now I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel preached by me is not of human origin. 12 For I did not receive it from a human being, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

Saint Paul affirms that what he preaches, the gospel message that salvation is possible for all men alike through faith in Christ, is the message which he received from Jesus directly and that he is simply passing it along. This revelation occurred on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:5).

"The gospel that is according to men is a lie, for every person is a liar (see Romans 3:4), seeing that whatever truth is found in a man is not from the man but through the man from God" [Saint Augustine of Hippo (ca. A.D. 394), *Explanation of the Epistle to the Galatians* 1B,1,11-12].

13 For you heard of my former way of life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it,

This former way of life would hardly provide the proper background for him to have formed the gospel message on his own. In fact, as a Pharisee he resolutely rejected what was opposed to the Mosaic Law and the Pharisaic interpretations of the written Torah. As a Pharisee he looked upon the "church of God" as being the assembly of the People of God in the desert; now he uses the term as a complimentary title for the Jewish-Christian churches in Jerusalem and Judea.

14 and progressed in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my race, since I was even more a zealot for my ancestral traditions.

"What he is saying is, 'If what I then did against the Church was done not on man's account but through zeal for God – mistaken, but zeal nonetheless – how can I now be acting for vainglory when I operate on behalf of the Church and know the truth?'" [Saint John Chrysostom (between A.D. 393-397), *Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* 1,14].

15 But when (God), who from my mother's womb had set me apart and called me through his grace,

Here he compares his calling to that of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:5) (see 1st reading, 4th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle C). He also has been destined for the apostolate by a gratuitous call from the Father before he was born.

was pleased ¹⁶ to reveal his Son to me, so that I might proclaim him to the Gentiles,

Saint Paul states that he has “seen” Jesus directly and is therefore legitimately an apostle. He couples his apostolic mission to the Gentiles with the revelation of Christ.

I did not immediately consult flesh and blood, ¹⁷ nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; rather, I went into Arabia and then returned to Damascus.

This emphatic denial of the human origin of his commission is explained by the chronological and geographic details which accompany it. His basic insight into Christ did not come from Jerusalem, the traditional center from which the “word of the Lord” went forth to men (see Isaiah 2:3 and Luke 24:49). Although the Twelve were apostles before him, and he is the “least of the apostles” (1 Corinthians 15:9), he is not an apostle of second rank.

¹⁸ Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to confer with Kephas and remained with him for fifteen days.

The term “Kephas” is a Greek transliteration of the Aramaic *kepha* which means “rock.” Saint Paul no doubt went to confer with Saint Peter for the purpose of inquiry, to get from him information about Jesus’ teaching and ministry. It was probably during this 15-day period that he learned of the “traditions” of the Jerusalem church (2 Thessalonians 3:6; 1 Corinthians 11:2, 23-25; 15:3-7).

¹⁹ But I did not see any other of the apostles, only James the brother of the Lord.

The purpose here is not to proclaim that James was not an apostle, but that Paul’s mission was to confer with the head of the apostles, the first pope, Peter.

“For if the foundation of the Church was laid in Peter, to whom all was revealed, as the gospel says, Paul knew that he ought to see Peter” [Marius Victorinus (ca. A.D. 355), *Epistle to the Galatians* 1,1,18].

Gospel - Luke 7:11-17

Having heard last week of the healing of the centurion’s servant, we move on to the account of the raising of the widow’s son at Nain. This account is recorded only in Saint Luke’s gospel and shows the Evangelist’s special delight in portraying Jesus not only overwhelmed with pity at the sight of tragedy but also as turning with kindly regard toward women. In the account of the centurion’s servant, the afflicted was dear to his master; in this account, the dead youth is the widow’s only son – her only means of support

and protection in a patriarchal society.

¹¹ [Jesus] journeyed to a city called Nain,

The city is located two to three hours by foot to the southeast from Nazareth, about eight to nine hours to the southwest from Capernaum.

and his disciples and a large crowd accompanied him.

The large crowd may have included not only relatives and friends, but also hired mourners and musicians.

¹² 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. ¹³ When the Lord saw her,

The title *ho kyrios*, translated here as “Lord,” is used here for the first of many times in Luke (e.g. 10:1, 41; 11:39; 12:42; 13:15). This title is used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint) for the divine name, Yahweh. It is most appropriately used here when Jesus demonstrates that He has power over life and death.

he was moved with pity for her and said to her, “Do not weep.” ¹⁴ He stepped forward and touched the coffin; at this the bearers halted, and he said, “Young man, I tell you, arise!” ¹⁵ The dead man sat up

The Greek word used here is used only one other place in the New Testament; in the account of Saint Peter raising the dead child in Acts 9:40. In non-Biblical use the term is a technical term used by medical writers.

and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother. ¹⁶ Fear seized them all, and they glorified God, exclaiming, “A great prophet has arisen in our midst,” and “God has visited his people.” ¹⁷ This report about him spread through the whole of Judea and in all the surrounding region.

This account is almost identical to our first reading. No wonder some said that Elijah had returned when describing Jesus.