



The Holy See

FUNERAL MASS FOR CARDINAL URBANO NAVARRETE, S.J. HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

Altar of the Chair, St Peter's Basilica

Wednesday, 24 November 2010

[Photo Gallery](#)

“Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake” (Dn 12:2).

The words of the Prophet Daniel that we have just heard are a clear Biblical testimony to faith in the resurrection of the dead. The prophetic vision looks to the end of time: after a period of great anguish God will save his People. Nevertheless, salvation will only be for those whose names are written in “the book of life”.

The horizon which Daniel describes is that of the people of the Covenant who, in times of difficulty, trial and persecution, must take their place before God, standing firm in the faith of the Fathers or renouncing it. The Prophet announces a twofold destiny, proclaiming that some will reawaken to “everlasting life” and others to “everlasting disgrace”. God's justice is therefore emphasized; it does not permit those who have given their life to God to lose it for ever.

This is Jesus' teaching: those who accept to put the Kingdom of God first, who can leave their home, father or mother for it and are prepared to lay down their life for this precious treasure will inherit eternal life (*cf.* Mt 19:29, Lk 9:24).

Your Eminences, Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood, all the faithful, in the light of Christ, our Life and Resurrection, today we are celebrating the Funeral Mass of dear and venerable Cardinal Urbano Navarrete, who completed his long and fruitful earthly pilgrimage last Monday, at the age of 90. He belongs, as we like to think, to the throng of those who spent their days without reservation for the Kingdom of God, and for this reason we are confident that his name is now written in “the book of life”.

“And those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever” (Dn 12:3).

With a moved and grateful spirit, I desire at this moment to remember the late Cardinal as a “teacher of justice”. The meticulous study and passionate teaching of canon law were a central element in his life. Teaching, especially the younger generations, about the true justice of Christ and of the Gospel: this is the ministry which Cardinal Navarrete exercised throughout his life. He generously dedicated himself to this, giving himself with humble willingness in the various situations in which obedience and God's Providence had placed him: from university classrooms, in particular as an expert in matrimonial law, to the office of Dean of the Faculty of Canon Law at the Pontifical Gregorian University, to the important and responsible office of Rector Magnificent of the same athenaeum. I am likewise keen to underline his attention to important ecclesial events including the Diocesan Synod in Rome and the Second Vatican Council, as well as his competent scientific contribution to the revision of the Code of Canon Law and his fruitful collaboration with various Dicasteries of the Roman Curia, in the capacity of a valued consultor.

Regarding his priestly and religious vocation, Cardinal Navarrete said with simplicity in a recent interview: “I have never doubted my decision. Nor have I ever had doubts that this was not my path, not even in moments of strife” or difficulty. This affirmation sums up the generous fidelity of this servant of the Church to the call of the Lord and to the will of God. With his characteristic poise he used to say that there were three fundamental principles which guided him in his studies: great love for the past, for tradition, because someone in the scientific and particular in the ecclesiastical field who does not love the past is like a child without parents; secondly, his sensibility to problems, requirements, challenges of the present, where God has placed us; lastly, his capacity for looking out and opening himself to the future without fear but with the hope that comes with faith. This profoundly Christian vision guided his commitment to God and to the Church, in teaching and in his works.

“But God, who is rich in mercy... made us alive together with Christ” (Ep 2:4).

Illuminated by St Paul's words which we have heard in the Second Reading, we turn our gaze to the mystery of the Incarnation, Passion, death and Resurrection of Christ, where our authentic justice lies, a gift of God's. Divine grace poured out abundantly for us through the saving blood of the crucified Christ, who cleanses us from our sins, frees us from death and opens the gates of eternal life. The Apostle forcefully repeats: “by grace you have been saved” (Ep 2:5), by the gift of abundant love of the Father who sacrificed his Son. In Christ, man finds the way of salvation and human history receives its point of reference and its profound meaning. Today we remember Cardinal Urbano Navarrete in this horizon of hope. He fell asleep in the Lord at the end of an active life, in which he ceaselessly professed faith in this mystery of love, proclaiming to all with the word and with life: “by grace you have been saved” (*ibid*).

“Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me” (Jn 17:24).

Christ's ardent and salvific will illumines life after death. Jesus wants those whom God gave to him to be with him and to contemplate his glory. Therefore, there is a destiny of happiness, of full union with God, which leads to the faithfulness with which we are united with Jesus Christ on our earthly journey. It will mean entering into the Communion of Saints where they reign in peace and joy, taking part together in Christ's glory.

The shining truth of faith in eternal life comforts us every time we offer our final farewell to a deceased brother. Cardinal Urbano Navarrete, a spiritual son of St Ignatius of Loyola, is one of the faithful disciples that the Father gave to Christ "so that they may be with him", he was "with Jesus" in the course of his long life and knew his Name (*cf.* Jn 17:26).

He loved living in intimate union with him, especially in prolonged moments of prayer in which he drew from the source of salvation the strength to be faithful to God's will in every circumstance, even the most adverse. He learned this at home as a child, thanks to the luminous example of his parents, especially his father. His parents knew how to provide an atmosphere of profound Christian faith in their family, fostering in their six children, two Jesuits and three religious, the courage to witness to their faith, preferring nothing to the love of Christ and doing everything for the greater glory of God.

Dear friends, it is this gaze of faith that sustained the long life of our venerable Brother and it is this faith that he preached. Let us turn to God, rich in mercy, so that Cardinal Urbano Navarrete's faith may now become a vision, a face-to-face encounter with him, in whose love he could recognize and seek the fulfilment of every law.

Let us entrust his soul to the intercession of the Mother of Jesus and our Mother. We may be certain that she, *Speculum iustitiae*, will welcome him, to introduce him into God's Heaven where he will enjoy for ever the fullness of peace. Amen.

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