

Reflection: Memorial of Saint Pius X - Memorial 21st August 2020

Ezekiel 37:1-14, Matthew 22:34-40

To restore all things in Christ. Eph 1:10. This was the motto that Giuseppe Melchior Sarto (1835-1914), second child of a cobbler and postman, made his own when he became Pope Pius X in 1903. By Providence, it is a motto that connects the readings of today, the vision of the Valley of the Dry Bones, and Jesus's teaching on the supreme laws - the love of God and the love of neighbour.

One could say a great deal on the various parts of the life, ministry, and pontificate of St Pius X. I will simply say that his virtuous life was all about helping others to virtue and holiness in all his actions.

One can talk about his famous teachings against modernism, but I would prefer for us to focus on what all of that was really about, which was a call to live the ancient faith of the Church, once delivered to the Saints, and to humble obedience of all that Christ teaches.

His widening of the reception of Holy Communion, aimed to bring more souls to intimacy with Our Lord in that most intimate Holy Sacrament of the Altar. His study and reforming of Canon Law, aimed to bring a more pastoral approach to the Church, but still focussed on her teachings and disciplines.

His encouraging of Gregorian Chant, and reforms of the liturgy, aimed to stop histrionic practice, and especially operatic, or dramatic, or secular musical styles from distracting us from what the Mass is all about, and to draw our attention to its sacred and solemn character. Vatican II forcefully reiterated his wish, but far too frequently, the bishops, and pastors have ignored it and allowed everything from Bossanova to Broadway to creep in.

To restore all things in Christ - God takes the dry bones and brings the dead to life again, but to what end? What is all this activity of St Pius X about? It is about the love of and communion with God, and our love and communion with each other. God restores the bones, that they might live once again as children of the Promised Land. We find that promise in the Church, and ultimately in Heaven, if we do not neglect the spiritual life.

The bones: the structures of the Church, her teachings, even our human virtues, are all necessary, but they must be animated by the Holy Spirit moving within us, enfleshing us, making us what we are truly meant to be as children of God, in order to be able to fulfill the two Great Commandments. That's what St Pius X's pastoral reforms were aimed at - to help the Catholic Faithful to deeper and personal holiness.

All things must be restored *in* Christ, and not without him. Bureaucracies, think-tanks, mission statements, Stewardship programmes, Experts, Legal teams, schools, hospitals, registered charities, none of these things matter at all without the indwelling Presence of the Holy Trinity. Without the life of the Trinity, it is all in vain, it is just activity that is ultimately aimless. Everything depends on the relationship of love - the Love of the God who is love - and the true love of our neighbour.

That is what the point of St Pius's life was, that is why he is a saint. Yes he did many truly great things, but his practical actions were all done with that aim of helping and saving souls, in order that they may rise together unto the new and eternal life, when all things are restored in Christ.

Saint Pius X, pray for us.