



The Holy See

FUNERAL MASS FOR CARDINAL TOMÁS SPIDLÍK, S.J.

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

Altar of the Chair, St Peter's Basilica

Tuesday, 20 April 2010

(Video)

[Images of the celebration](#)

*Venerable Brothers,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

"Throughout my life I have sought the Face of Jesus and I am now happy and at peace because I am about to go and see him", were among the last words of the late Cardinal Spidlík. This wonderful thought so simple, almost infantile in its expression yet so profound and true refers directly to Jesus' prayer, which resounded just now in the Gospel: "Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to behold my glory which you have given me in your love for me before the foundation of the world" (Jn 17: 24). It is beautiful and consoling to meditate on this correspondence between the desire of man who aspires to see the Face of the Lord, and the desire of Jesus himself. In fact, Christ's desire is far more than an aspiration: it is a will. Jesus says to the Father: "*I desire* that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me", And it is precisely here, in this desire, that we find the "rock", the solid foundation for believing and for hoping. Jesus' desire, in fact, coincides with God the Father's and, with the work of the Holy Spirit, constitutes for the human being a sort of sure "embrace", strong and gentle, which leads him to eternal life.

What an immense gift to listen to this desire of God from his own mouth! I think that the great men of faith live immersed in this grace, they have the gift of perceiving this truth with special strength and thus they too may pass through harsh trials, as did Fr Tomás Spidlík, without losing trust,

indeed, on the contrary, preserving a keen sense of humour which is certainly a sign of intelligence but also of inner freedom. Seen from this angle, the likeness between our late Cardinal and Venerable John Paul II was obvious: they both had an inclination for witty jokes, in spite of having gone through difficult, and in some respects similar, personal events in their youth. Providence brought them to meet and to collaborate for the Church's good, especially so that she might learn to breathe deeply "with both her lungs", as the Slav Pope liked to say.

This freedom and presence of mind has its objective basis in Christ's Resurrection. It pleases me to underline it because we are in the liturgical Season of Easter and because the First and Second Readings from the Bible for this celebration suggest it. In his first preaching on the day of Pentecost St Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, proclaimed the fulfilment in Jesus Christ of Psalm 16. It is marvellous to see how the Holy Spirit reveals to the Apostles all the beauty of those words in the full inner light of the Resurrection: "I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken; therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; moreover my flesh will dwell in hope" (Acts 2: 25-26; cf. Ps 16[15]: 8-9). This prayer encounters superabundant fulfilment when Christ, the Holy One of God, is not abandoned in Hades. He was the first to know "the path of life" and was filled with joy by the Father's presence (cf. Acts 2: 27-28); Ps 16[15]: 11). The hope and joy of the Risen Jesus are also the hope and joy of his friends, thanks to the action of the Holy Spirit. Fr Spidlík habitually demonstrated this by his way of life and his witness became ever more eloquent as the years passed for despite his advanced age and the inevitable aches and pains, his spirit remained fresh and youthful. What is this other than friendship with the Risen Lord?

In the Second Reading, St Peter blesses God because "by his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead". And he adds: "In this you rejoice, though now for a little while you may have to suffer various trials" (1 Pt 1: 3, 6). Here too, the fact that hope and joy are theological realities which radiate from the mystery of Christ's Resurrection and from the gift of his Spirit clearly emerges. We could say that the Holy Spirit takes them from the Heart of the Risen Christ and transfuses them in the hearts of his friends.

I intentionally introduced the image of the "heart" because, as many of you know, Fr Spidlík chose it for the motto of his coat of arms as Cardinal: "Ex toto corde", "with all your heart". This expression is found in the Book of Deuteronomy in the first and fundamental commandment of the law when Moses says to the people: "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might" (Dt 6: 4-5)' "With all your heart *ex toto corde*" thus refers to the way in which Israel must love her God. Jesus confirms the primacy of this commandment with which he combines the commandment to love one's neighbour, saying that the latter is "like" the former and that all the law and the prophets depend on both (cf. Mt 22: 37-39). In choosing this motto, our venerable Brother placed his life, so to speak, within the commandment of love, he dedicated the whole of it to the primacy of God and

of charity.

There is another aspect, a further meaning of the expression "*ex toto corde*", which surely Fr Spidlík had in mind and intended to express with his motto. Again, based on its biblical root, the symbol of the heart represents the seat of prayer in oriental spirituality, the encounter between man and God, but also with other human beings and with the cosmos. And here one should remember that in Cardinal Spidlík's coat of arms, the heart, that dominates in the shield, contains a cross in whose arms the words PHOS and ZOE intersect, "light" and "life", which are names for God. Therefore, the person who fully receives, *ex toto corde*, God's love, accepts light and life and becomes in turn light and life in humanity and in the universe.

But who is this man? Who is this "heart" of the world if not Jesus Christ? It is he who is the Light and the Life, for in him "the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily" (Col 2: 9). And here I wish to recall that our late Brother was a member of the Society of Jesus, that is, a spiritual son of St Ignatius who places at the heart of faith and spirituality contemplation of God in the mystery of Christ. In this symbol of the heart East and West meet, not in a devotional but in a profoundly Christological sense, as other Jesuit theologians highlighted in the past century. And Christ, a central figure of Revelation, is also the formal principle of Christian art, a sphere in which Fr Spidlík was a great master, an inspirer of ideas and expressive projects of which there is an important synthesis in the *Redemptoris Mater Chapel* of the Apostolic Palace.

I would like to conclude, returning to the theme of the Resurrection, by citing a text very dear to Cardinal Spidlík, a passage from the *Hymns on the Resurrection* by St Ephrem the Syrian:

"From on high he descended as Lord,
from the womb he emerged as a servant,
death knelt before him in Sheol,
and life worshipped him in his Resurrection.
Blessed be his triumph!" (n. 1,8).

May the Virgin Mother of God accompany the soul of our venerable Brother to the embrace of the Most Holy Trinity, where with all his heart he will praise their infinite love for all eternity. Amen

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