

FAROL

Saint Braulion of Saragossa (c.590-651), Bishop
Letter 19; PL 80, 665

«When the Lord saw her... he said to her: 'Do not weep'» (Lk 7,13)

Christ, hope of the believer, does not call those who leave this world 'dead' but 'sleeping' when he says: «Our friend Lazarus is asleep» (Jn 11,11). The apostle Paul, likewise, does not want us to be grieved «about those who have fallen asleep» (1Thes 4,13). By this, if our faith holds that «everyone who believes» in Christ, according to his word in the Gospel, «will never die» (Jn 11,26), we know that he himself is not dead and we too will not die. Because «the Lord himself, with a word of command, with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God, will come down from heaven and the dead will rise» (1Thes 4,16). May hope in the resurrection encourage us, then, since we shall see then all those we have lost. It matters that we should firmly believe in him, that is to say that we obey his precepts, since he applies his mighty power to raising the dead with more ease than we rouse those who are asleep.

This is what we say; and yet, I don't know through what feeling, we take refuge in tears and a feeling of regret compromises our faith. Alas! How pitiable man's condition is, and without Christ how empty our life is! But you, O death, who are cruel enough to break the union between spouses and separate those whom friendship unites, from henceforth your power has been shattered. From now on your pitiless yoke has been crushed by him who threatened you through the words of the prophet Hosea: «O death, I will be your death» (Hos 13,14 Vulg.). That is why we hurl our challenge together with the apostle Paul: «Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?» (1Cor 15,55). He who vanquished you has redeemed us; he has delivered his beloved soul into the hands of sinners that he might make them his beloved friends.

It would take too long to call to mind everything in Holy Scripture that should bring us all consolation. It is enough to hope in the resurrection and raise our eyes to the glory of our Redeemer since it is in him that we are already raised, as our faith gives us to believe, according to the apostle Paul's words: «If we have died with Christ we believe that we shall also live with him» (Rom 6,8).