

XVI Trinity 2023
Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish
Father Craig Looney

Ephesians 3.13-21 St. Luke 7.11-17



“Born again” is a phrase often associated with churches calling themselves “evangelical”. Anglican Catholics are sometimes surprised to learn we are both **born again** by water and the Holy Spirit into new life in Christ through Holy Baptism...and **evangelical**...we’re about the business of spreading the Good News about Jesus Christ.

Today we had the privilege of administering the Sacrament of Holy Baptism to Henry Yang Walrod. Today is even more special because it is Henry’s actual first birthday and his re-birthday into new life as a member of the Body of Christ...the Church. Isn’t that amazing!

In the Baptismal Liturgy we asked God to give Henry the Holy Spirit so he might be **born again** and made an heir of everlasting salvation. His godparents made promises to help raise him in the faith, to teach him the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, the Ten Commandments and to encourage him to live his life as a child of God. We should take this time to meditate on our own baptisms and the commitment we made or was made for us to follow Jesus.

This morning’s Gospel reading begins with a death and ends in life restored...a broken family is made whole again. The Gospels are not just words written down 2000 years ago for a limited audience. We should always try to place ourselves in the scene recorded in the Gospels.

Jesus is and his disciples and a large crowd were heading into a town called Nain. The Nain of today is a mostly Arab town of about 2000 some 90 miles north of Jerusalem. Let’s imagine we are walking with Jesus toward the town. We see what Jesus sees...a funeral procession heading out of town toward the cemetery. A widowed mother is burying her only son. Nain was a small town...everyone knew each other and took part in the funeral procession.

This is a story that tugs at the heart. It tugged at Jesus’ heart too...the Gospel tells us he was filled with pity for the widowed mother. We don’t know why the young man died...it must

have been sudden and unexpected. The widowed mother’s world had come crashing down on her. Who would take care of her now? Jesus was about to make our widowed mother’s life whole again...he would give her son back to her.

Jesus told the mother to stop crying. He touched the boy’s casket and said, “Young man! Get up, I tell you!” That was not a request...it was a command! Jesus demonstrated he had power over death. The boy sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him back to his mother. We can only imagine the mother’s reaction as her despair and sorrow was immediately replaced by joy and happiness. How would we have reacted had we been there?

There is an important distinction to be made between the eternal life Jesus promises us and the miraculous restoration of the young man’s life in the Gospel. Jesus gave the young man back to his mother. We don’t know what happened next...perhaps a great community celebration. We hope the boy found a good job and provided for his mother and lived life to the fullest. He would experience physical death again at some point in the future.

God reveals his power to us through the love of Jesus. In the Epistle, Saint Paul prays we will be given power to be strong in our “inner selves”. He prays that Jesus will make his home in our hearts through faith...a love-based faith. Pope Saint John Paul II always said to the hundreds of thousands of young people who came to see him to be courageous in their faith.

Today we celebrate Henry Yang Walrod’s birthday and his re-birthday. He has been born again into new life in Jesus. We pray the Holy Spirit working in and through him will lead him into a life of love and service to God and to be courageous and unwavering in his faith. Parents and Godparents...you have a role with God’s help in making this happen.

Saint Paul writes, “To him who by means of his power working in us is able to do so much more than we can ever ask for, or think of, to God be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever! Amen!”

What a great day to celebrate Henry’s birthday and his re-birthday.

