

XVI Trinity 2024
Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish
Father Craig Looney
St. Luke 7.11-17



"I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live".

We hear these words from the Burial Office at the beginning of every Requiem Mass celebrated in this parish. They set the tone for why we have funeral liturgies. We have them because we believe in Jesus who is the Resurrection and the Life...and this belief strengthens our hope. And we are people of hope!

All of Gospels record Jesus bringing a dead person back to life...

...Matthew, Mark and Luke record Jesus raising Jairus' daughter. Jairus was an important leader of the local synagogue. His daughter was very sick and he came to Jesus for help. While they were on their way back to Jairus' house, some people met them and told Jairus his daughter had died. When they got back to Jairus' house, Jesus takes the girl by the hand and says, "Little girl, I tell you get up". HE GAVE THE GIRL BACK TO HER FATHER with instructions to give her something to eat.

...John records Jesus raising Lazarus. When Jesus learned Lazarus had died, he cried deep gut-wrenching tears. Jesus tells Lazarus' sister, Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live". He asked Martha if she believed this and she said she did. Jesus raised Lazarus from his grave after four days. JESUS GAVE LAZARUS BACK TO MARTHA.

...Luke records in this morning's Gospel, Jesus was on the outskirts of Nain, a small village about 50 miles north of Jerusalem. Jesus encounters the funeral procession for a young man. We are not told why the young man died. We are told he was the only son of a widow and he was young. Professional mourners accompanied the funeral procession as they made their way to the cemetery.

For the grieving mother, the loss of her only son left her life in shambles. She depended upon him for everything. There were few opportunities for women to earn a living.

Unless she had sympathetic friends or relatives, she might have to live on the streets. Her future appeared bleak and hopeless.

Luke tells us when Jesus saw the widow crying his "heart was moved with pity". God does not like to see people suffer. Jesus wanted to do something to make the mother's sadness go away. He told her to stop crying; things were going to be OK. He then touched the boy's casket and said, "Young man, I tell you to get up". The boy sat up and must have wondered and perhaps been terrified at what happened to him. JESUS GAVE THE BOY BACK TO HIS MOTHER.

When Jesus healed three young people by raising them from the dead, he demonstrated his compassion for them and their families. He showed he had power over death. He showed he could turn grief and sorrow into unparalleled joy. He restored hope to the lives of people who had lost all hope.

We say we are people of hope, and that means we should always try to live like people of hope. Jesus invites us to come to him for strength and hope at every Mass. "Come to me," he says, "all of you who are tired from carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest." Jesus has made it possible for us to leave here today strengthened in Word and Sacrament, refreshed and full of new hope.

Jesus didn't leave the widowed mother from Nain without hope and he doesn't leave us without hope. At every Requiem Mass we hear the words from John's Gospel in which Jesus tells us not to worry about death, because he has gone to make his Father's house ready for us. He gives us his promise we will be reunited with him and our loved ones in heaven. We convey this Gospel message of hope at every Requiem Mass.

Jesus tells us, *"I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live"*.

We believe what Jesus tells us is true. Death is not extinction but the commencement of life everlasting in heaven. In his ultimate sacrifice for us on the cross, JESUS HAS GIVEN US BACK TO GOD.

That's why we are people who are never without hope.

