

Today we have this powerful story of the raising of the widow's son from the dead. We know there are a couple of other examples in the Scriptures of Jesus raising people from the dead. Of course, the story of the raising of Lazarus and the story of the raising of the daughter of Jairus. But this raising story, you'll notice, is a little different. In this story no one is asking Jesus for help. For Lazarus, Martha says "If you had been here, my brother would not have died." Jairus says, "My daughter is at the point of death. Please, come lay your hands on her that she may get well and live." Jesus sets on His own initiative and in this we see His great compassion.

Let's look at the scene a little closer. The one who died was the only son of a widow. So she was alone. Her husband had died, and now her only son had died, so she has the terrible grief of losing her son after already having lost her husband. She has the prospect now of being alone, and on top of this, in those days women didn't really work for income. So now she has to be completely dependent on the charity of others to live. Maybe she now would even have to be reduced to begging.

The Lord sees all this going on. The exact scripture we heard was: "When the Lord saw her, He was moved with pity for her." So we see the Lord's great compassion here. He is not oblivious to our sorrows. He knows what we need. He does not turn a blind eye. He does not ignore us.

We see in this story also a revelation of who Jesus is. This story echoes the story of the prophet Elijah who, by the power of God, also raises the son of a widow. So by raising the widow's son, Jesus reveals that He too is a great prophet, filled with the power of God to raise from the dead. But, of course, more than a prophet. He is the ruler over life and death, and this raising of the dead is a sign that He is the Messiah.

But as Messiah, He did not come expressly for the purpose of raising people from physical death. He came to save all of us from spiritual death. Spiritual death now as we live our earthly life and the eternal spiritual death of being separated from God forever. We know this power of His to raise us from spiritual death. Many of us have experienced it, especially in the Sacrament of Confession.

But many of us worry about others we believe to be spiritually dead. This is a holy worry because we want all people to be saved and to go to heaven, but we also know that eternal spiritual death is possible for any of us because of God's gift to us of free will. And so when we know by their external actions that someone is not walking in God's way, it worries us and it should. This is a sign of true love for that person. This is especially acute for parents regarding their adult children. I know because many of you have come to see me about such situations, and of course we should constantly intercede before God for those who seem lost, like Saint Monica who pleaded with God for the salvation of the souls of her husband and for her son, Saint Augustine. And her prayers were heard.

But again back to the miracle story of today. Great comfort, even without being asked, Jesus has pity. Jesus raises from the dead. So if we think how much we want those we love to be saved, how much more does Jesus want them to be saved, and He works constantly to head them to say yes to Him and to lead them to spiritual resurrection.

My friends, Jesus Christ is the Messiah. The savior of the world, who raises the dead and leads all to eternal life.

Given by Father Mark Gurtner at Our Lady of Good Hope Catholic Church, Fort Wayne, Indiana, on the 10th Sunday of Ordinary Time, 2016.