

This is an incredible thing that Jesus does: He raises a dead man to life. There is particular joy in this miracle because the man was the only son of a woman who was a widow. So presumably the woman has no one else. So by raising her son back to life, not only does he save her from loneliness of life but also more than likely he saves her from destitution because in those days it was very hard for a woman on her own to make a living. So this is a great mercy on the part of Jesus to restore to this woman the life of her son.

Quite a tremendous miracle, one which would continue in the life of the Church. In the Book of Acts, St. Peter raises a dead woman named Tabitha. St. Paul raised Eutychus from the dead. Also, I found a list of 49 saints and blessed throughout Church history who raised the dead. One Dominican priest, Saint Vincent Ferrer, raised 28 people from the dead. Saint Patrick was known to have raised many people from the dead too. All, of course, done by the power of God.

This miracle power of raising people from the dead is surely a sign of God's power over life and death. It is also a sign of the truth that Jesus is the resurrection and the life. But it is a symbol of something even greater.

The worst possible thing that can happen to a human being is not that their body dies, but that their soul dies. And we know what kills the soul: sin. Venial sin makes the soul sick. Mortal sin kills it. So those miracle stories of Jesus and the saints raising people from the dead symbolize an even greater work done by Jesus. In and through the Church He does it all the time, raising the spiritually dead back to life through the forgiveness of sins. Through the Holy Eucharist, the Lord Jesus forgives our venial sins and brings greater health to the soul. Through the Sacrament of Confession, Jesus forgives mortal sins (and venial) and raises the dead soul back to life, restoring sanctifying grace to the soul and re-establishing the relationship with God.

In our day many worry almost to the point of obsession about the health of our body, but many take little notice about the health of their soul. We do have to attend to the needs of our bodies. I'm not saying we should neglect that. But above all we should attend to the health of our souls.

Regarding our souls, it is not too hard to fall into the sin of sloth. Sloth is defined as "sluggishness of soul or boredom because of the exertion necessary for the performance of a good work." One can be spiritually slothful – many times this can even happen in a person who is not otherwise lazy, someone maybe who works a lot, attends to family, but is lazy regarding God.

Such a person:

- Takes little or no time to pray
- Not attentive to coming to Mass – even Sunday Mass
- Never or rarely goes to confession
- Never any meditation on the Word of God
- Does not exert one's self to avoid sin

Such spiritual laziness can cause one to have a sick soul. The signs of a sick soul are clear. A person with a sick soul falls more easily to sin. They feel distant from God, and they struggle to do good.

This spiritual laziness can even cause the death of the soul, a broken relationship with God and complete slavery to sin. Living on earth with a dead soul is like beginning to live the life of Hell.

Such sickness of soul can even have physical and psychological effects. The Catechism says this about spiritual laziness, "Spiritual laziness is understood by this as a form of depression due to lax spiritual practice, decreasing vigilance, carelessness of heart."

In our society for many the way to deal with this is not to run to God so that the soul might be healed and filled, but to run to distractions, to seek constantly to be entertained, to use entertainment as a way to avoid dealing with the fact that one's soul is sick or dead.

Jesus has given the Church every power of grace to heal sick souls and to raise to life souls which are dead in sin. Jesus delights to heal and to save souls, to raise dead souls from the dead.

Constantly seek Jesus, the healer and raiser of your soul, and avoid any kind of spiritual laziness so that your soul might always be full of the life, light, and love of God and so begin living heaven even now during your earthly life.

Given by Father Mark Gurtner at Our Lady of Good Hope Catholic Church, Fort Wayne, Indiana, on the 10th Sunday of Ordinary Time, 2013.