

Commentary to the Tenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

The Lord of Life



How dark the world had become for those two women, the widow of Zeraphath in the first reading and the widow of Nain in the Gospel. Because they were widows, they had no way to support themselves other than what living they could scratch out, perhaps doing some sewing, or working in the fields during the harvest time. But they each had a great joy. They had sons. Not only were these the lights of their lives, but their sons would be the ones who would care for them when they could no longer care for themselves. And then their sons died. There is no greater grief than to lose a child. Nothing that the world throws at us can be worse than the death of a child, other, obviously, than the death of several children. The widows' grief had to be unfathomable. But God was aware of their grief. In the first reading God heard the prayers of Elijah for the widow of Zeraphath and restored her son's life. In the Gospel Jesus brought the widow of Nain's son back to life.

God transformed their grief into complete joy. We are all tempted to be bound by the negatives of life. We certainly hear enough, too much really, about the horrible things that happen throughout the world. We should be aware of the suffering of other people so we can reach out to them, but life is not negative. It is wonderful. It is full of joy and laughter. Our world is beautiful. Look at our West Coast of Florida sunsets. Consider the magnificence of our country, the canyon lands, the mountains, the lakes and oceans.

Look at our children. How can we not help but recognize how wonderful the world is when we see our high school people excel not just in their academics, but take their first steps to becoming productive members of our faith and our country? How can we not be positive when we see our college people giving a summer or a year to serve the Lord in his poorest people, and then taking leadership positions

in the faith? How can we not be positive when we see so many of our families taking their Catholicism so seriously? How can we not be full of joy when we look at the faces of our little children?

There are so many positives in the world. We have been given a tremendous gift, Jesus Christ. The Victor has conquered the negatives of life. Jesus Christ has conquered death. The waters of our baptism have immersed us into beauty. "The Word of the Lord truly comes from your mouth," the widow of the first reading exclaimed. "A great prophet has risen from our midst," the people of the Gospel added. You can feel the excitement and joy in the people who proclaimed these statements. Prophecy and life are linked together. The way of the Lord is the way of life. Yes, bad things have happened and will continue to happen.

But with Jesus Christ, even the unthinkable, the death of a child will result in the total union of the child with God, forever young in the Lord. We certainly can understand how parents feel overwhelmed with grief, but through it all they have the joy of knowing that they have their own special intercessor, an angel if you will, with the Lord. We Christians cannot help but be optimists. We are people of faith and people of hope. We believe that Jesus Christ has conquered death and have faith that he gives us a share of eternal life. We are people of hope. Our hope is that our own deaths will lead to a transition into full union with God. Like those widows who experienced the raising of their sons from the dead, we rejoice because the Lord has shared His victory over death with each of us. During the Easter season we often proclaimed "Alleluia, Christ has risen." This joy, though, is not limited to Easter.

It is the joy we have throughout the year: Alleluia, Christ has conquered death. We have received the gift of eternal life. The contemporary Christian composer Steve Fee wrote a song that was popularized by Casting Crowns: Giver of every breath I breathe Author of all eternity Giver of every perfect thing To You be the glory Maker of Heaven and of Earth No one can comprehend Your worth King over all the universe To You be the glory And I am alive because I'm alive in You It's all because of Jesus I'm alive It's all because the blood of Jesus Christ That covers me and raised this dead man's life It's all because of Jesus I'm alive.

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