

LUKE 7: 11-16

11. And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people.

12. Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her.

13. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not.

14. And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.

15. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother.

16. And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people.

The miracle by our Savior was, of course, done in order to console the grieving mother. Seeing her grief, the Lord's ever-compassionate heart had to help her. But as the Church teaches us, there was another reason why Jesus resurrected this man. The resurrection was an image of the teaching which states that all people will resurrect at the end of the world. Jesus was confirming His power over death. His Resurrection gave Him power to completely destroy death's control over man. His Resurrection makes possible for all people to be able to resurrect to an eternal blessed life.

Death was not part of God's intent for His highest earthly creation, man. Man was created for an eternal blessed life in communion with his Creator. But sin interfered and separated man from his creator. Death then became necessary for two reasons. The all-just God could not allow for His Law to be transgressed without consequences. The transgressor had to pay the penalty for his sin. At the same time, God, Who is also all merciful, used the death of people as a way of freeing them from the cycle of sin. If people did not die, they would continue a life of sin for eternity with no hope of every being freed from their miserable condition. In this way, our death is for us a great blessing.

Despite being something inevitable, death continues to be great mystery. Is death the end of life or not? Tragically, more and more people believe that it is. Therefore, for them it makes sense to end it when it is too painful or just useless. It is even becoming acceptable for the decision to terminate a life to be made by a person other than the one who will die. Mothers abort their babies who are sick, not the desired sex, or just inconvenient. Doctors whose sacred duty to heal and preserve life have become instead agents of death. This culture of death is increasing in acceptance and even widening its boundaries as to what classes of people it is acceptable to kill. It is also in complete defiance of God's Law. He is the master over life and death. It is He who decides as to when a person should die and what should follow. For any person to usurp this power from the Lord and decide for himself when to end either his own or someone else's life is a dire act that has grave consequences for that person in his judgment before God.

But, if death is not the end of life, what is it that follows? The answer to this question is best given by Christ's teachings. Our life on earth is a short period of time gifted to us by God. He gives us this time to allow us to demonstrate to Him through the way that we live how we wish to live in eternity. Christ then, through His love and mercy, sends death to us at the most advantageous moment in our life for us. This is why death comes at a different moment in the life of each person. After one's death, the person's soul faces Christ for a partial reward or condemnation based on how that person lived. The final judgment will come after the end of the world when all people's bodies will resurrect to reunite with their souls for a new life in eternity.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, the fathers of the Church encourage us to always remember that our death can occur at any time. We then will face the Lord in the exact spiritual condition that we are at the moment of our death. May our constant remembrance of our pending death spiritually strengthen us to live according to God's commandments. And may the understanding that we can resurrect to a new eternal blessed life encourage us to always sincerely repent at the moments when we fall.

With Much Love in Christ,

Archpriest Serge Kotar