



**Homily**  
**10<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**By the Most Rev Timothy Costelloe SDB**  
**Archbishop of Perth**

Vietnamese Catholic Community Chapel, Westminster  
Sunday, 5 June 2016

Towards the end of St John's Gospel, the writer makes a statement about his own Gospel which is, in fact true, of all four Gospels:

"There were many other signs," he writes, "that Jesus worked and the disciples saw, but they are not recorded in this book. These are recorded so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, believing this, you may have life through His name" (John 20:30-31).

Each week, as we listen to the Gospel reading at Mass, it is important for us to remember this idea from John's Gospel. It invites us to ask ourselves just why the Gospel writer chose to include this particular event in his Gospel, and to reflect on just what it teaches us about Jesus as the Christ, or Messiah, and as the Son of God, the living presence of God among us as one of us.

Everything Jesus said and did was a revelation of God and especially of God's loving compassion and mercy for His people. Many things have changed since the time of Jesus but this has not changed. God's love and compassion are as real, and as available, and as life-changing today as they were for the people who encountered Jesus two thousand years ago on the other side of the world.

This, after all, is what the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead, His return to His Father in heaven through the ascension, and His fulfilment of His promise to send the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, means. Jesus, the presence of God among us, is no longer tied to a particular time and place. Through the gift of His Spirit, and through the life and ministry of His Church, Jesus continues to be the bearer of God's mercy, compassion, forgiveness and love today. He continues to seek to encounter us in our daily lives, both in times of joy and peace, and in times of sadness and turmoil.

This is why the Gospel writers choose the stories they do from the many stories about Jesus which must have been available to them. It is because these stories are especially effective in helping us understand what we might call the mind and heart of Jesus which are, of course, the mind and heart of God.



With this in mind, we can begin to understand a little better the deeper meaning of the story we have listened to today from St Luke's Gospel. The most remarkable thing about the story is, of course, the raising of a dead man to life. A number of times in the Gospels, Jesus raises the dead to life – perhaps the most well-known is the raising of Lazarus – and behind these stories is the unshakeable conviction of the followers of Jesus that Jesus is, indeed, the Lord of life. In all these Gospel stories, Jesus raises the dead to life through His own word, His own power.

In doing so, He reveals Himself to be the presence of God among His people, for only God is the Lord of life. Of course, this truth is fully revealed in the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead. But, in that case, it is not a restoration to the old life but an entry into the new life of eternal joy with God. The Gospel writers continually want us to understand, because it was clear that Jesus had continually wanted people to understand, that the real life, the full life He brings, is eternal life with God. It is the power of Jesus over earthly life and death which points to the much greater power to share with us the divine life of eternity.

The young man raised to life in this morning's Gospel will die again. If he does not outlive his mother, she will once again suffer the pain of his loss. But, in raising this young man to life, Jesus reveals that the gift of life He brings is not for the next world only but for this world as well.

His concern is for our present needs as well as for our eternal happiness. In Jesus' time, widows were particularly vulnerable. They had no husband to care for them, and there were no social service benefits or safety nets such as we have today. Without a family to look after them, they would quickly become destitute. In restoring the dead boy to his mother, Jesus does not just give the boy his life: he gives back to the mother her life as well. It is an act of deep compassion and, we might even say, of practical generosity. The mother is in desperate need – and Jesus responds to that need.

In St John's Gospel, when the risen Jesus appears to His frightened and amazed disciples, He says something to them which is really a word for the whole Church.

He says to them, "As the Father sent me, so am I sending you". In our Catholic tradition, we believe that the Church is called to be the living sign, the sacrament, that Jesus continues to be among us. For that reason, it is to us, the community of disciples which we call the Church, that Jesus says, "As the Father sent me, so I am now sending you".

We might not have the power to raise the dead to life as Jesus did, but we do have the power to reach out to those in need and care for them. Just as Jesus, out of His deep compassion and mercy, was able to give hope and the promise of a future to the grieving widow, so we, too, can be people who sow hope in the lives of others.



To do this, we will need to allow the Lord to continue to shape within us hearts of compassion and generosity. We will need to allow Him to help us see through His eyes and listen with His ears and be moved with compassion as He was. This is what it means to be a disciple. This is what it means to live life to the full. This is what it means, as our opening prayer this morning expressed it, to discern what is right and, with the Lord's help, to actually do it. Let this be our prayer today, for ourselves, for each other, and for the whole Church.