

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST, OCTOBER 1/14, 2007

GAL. 1:11-19

ST. LUKE 7:11-16

by

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*Gospel: 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. 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 were with her. And when the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not.*

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

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

*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.*

In St. Luke 7:1-10, Christ entered into Capernaum, a centurion's dear servant was sick, readying to die. When he heard of the Lord, he sent the Jewish elders to plead that He come and heal his servant.<sup>1</sup> Yet, when Jesus arrived, the centurion sent friends to tell the Lord not to come into his house because he was not worthy to receive Christ. The Lord healed the man's servant without entering under his roof. "Truly wondrous is the faith of this man who calls himself unworthy to be visited by Jesus."<sup>2</sup> Notice that the centurion knew- he had faith that Christ could heal his servant by merely saying the word. This man's faith and humility are to be admired and emulated by us all!

In today's Gospel, Christ performs another, more remarkable miracle, this time in the city of Nain. Quite a throng, including many of His disciples, were there, some carrying out a dead man, who was his mother's only son. When the Saviour looked at her, he had compassion and told her not to weep. The Lord now does the remarkable miracle- not healing a sick person but raising the dead! He physically touched the funeral bier and commanded: "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise."<sup>3</sup>

The glory of the Lord shone on the dead man. He sat up and began to speak! The Lord delivered him to his mother. The people feared and glorified God, "saying that a great prophet is risen up among us; and, that God hath visited His people".<sup>4</sup> The Lord raised the dead man in such a dramatic personal fashion [contrasted with the 'absentee' healing of the servant], raising him up as he was being carried to his burial. Christ did it

to combat the argument that the miracle involving the centurion was not remarkable since perhaps the servant would not have died anyway.

Jesus healed the dead man physically, not by His word alone [which, of course, he could have done]. He performs the miracle, not by His word only, but also by His touching the bier. By this gesture, He teaches us “that His very Body is life”.<sup>5</sup> God the Word took flesh, created life thereby and destroyed death and corruption.

Imagine! The dead man rose up and began to speak! According to the Bl. Theophylact’s explanation of the Fathers’ teachings, this “Sitting up and speaking are definite proof of resurrection from the dead; for how can a lifeless body sit up and speak”?<sup>6</sup> He sat up and spoke “as *evidence* (emphasis supplied) of the general and common resurrection of the dead: for these (actions) were sure and reliable signs of a resurrection, since a soulless body cannot sit up, nor, indeed, can it speak”.<sup>7</sup> Christ did not resurrect this young man as the prophets Elijah and Elisha had done. These holy men had raised the dead by prayer and supplication. Christ raised the dead man in His own right, by His command as Lord and Saviour!<sup>8</sup>

Bl. Theophylact also explains an alternative understanding of today’s Gospel. Consider that the widow can “mean the soul which has suffered the loss of its husband, the Word of God Which sows the good seed”.<sup>9</sup> The widow’s son is the dead mind being carried outside the Holy City, “heavenly Jerusalem which is the land of the living”.<sup>10</sup> The bier (coffin) carrying the dead mind is the tomb- the body considered a burial mound, meaning tomb.

Christ lovingly touches the body, restores the “youth and vigor” of the mind; the young man (mind) sits up, being raised from the tomb of sin and begins to teach others. He has been resurrected from his sin. He could not speak, teach others, whilst in the throes of spiritual death. Bl. Theophylact concludes with a question, which has only one answer: “For while he is in the grip of sin, he cannot speak or teach: who would believe him?”<sup>11</sup>

Following this miracle, Christ’s ‘fame’ spread throughout all Judea and the surrounding area. St. John the Forerunner’s disciples heard of it, and John sent two of his disciples to observe the miracles and thus believe because he *knew* who Christ was, he had recognised Him whilst still in Elizabeth’s womb and leapt with joy.<sup>12</sup>

*“And it came to pass, that, when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost.”*<sup>13</sup>

In our daily lives, display the humility and faith of the centurion, who knew the Lord could heal his servant even without being present. Believe fervently in Christ and be comforted in knowing that He extends His pity and mercy to us as He did the young man’s widowed mother. He is our Salvation. His Resurrection saves us from spiritual death.

+ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Bl. Theophylact's *Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to St. Luke, Vol. III* in the series, Bl. Theophylact's Explanation of the New Testament (tr. from the original Greek by Fr. Christopher Stade), Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1997, p.73.

<sup>2</sup> *id.*, p.74.

<sup>3</sup> *id.*

<sup>4</sup> *id.*

<sup>5</sup> *id.*, p.75.

<sup>6</sup> *id.*

<sup>7</sup> Hieromonk German Ciuba (tr. from the Slavonic into English; translated from the Greek into Slavonic in the year 6851, in the 11th Indiction), *The Gospel Commentary*, Russian Orthodox Church of the Nativity of Christ (Old Rite), Erie, PA, 2002, p.451.

<sup>8</sup> *id.*, p.452.

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<sup>9</sup> Bl. Theophylact, *op. cit.*, p.75.

<sup>10</sup> *id.*

<sup>11</sup> *id.*

<sup>12</sup> *id.*, Bl. Theophylact's explanation of St. Luke 17-30, at pp.76-77.

<sup>13</sup> St. Luke 1:41.