

Today we have 2 stories of young men being raised from the dead. We listen to the stories, we appreciate the miracle and we get to the point of, so what. What do these stories have to do with our daily lives?

Throughout the Old Testament we read about strong and courageous women, Ruth and Ester come immediately to mind. But no matter how brave, how intelligent these women were, their legal status was totally dependent upon the men in their lives. Women were subject to their fathers as children, or their brothers in the absence of the father. Once married, their legal and social status was dependent upon their husbands or in their absence, their sons.

When a widow lost her only son, she went out to bury the body recognizing that she would soon follow him to the grave. The community would mourn the passing of the son, and the plight of the widow as part of the funeral. There wasn't any safety net for the widow. They could beg on the street and live in the corners, but in a society where most lived on the brink of starvation, just bringing someone into the home to care for them usually wasn't seen as a viable option.

In that society, caring for the widows, the orphaned, the crippled, the marginalized was a personal responsibility. People had to accept responsibility for the well-being of their neighbors and act on it. There weren't any government agencies, or mega charities. They couldn't just throw some money at the problem and try to feel good about it because they didn't have any money to throw.

They had to set aside a serving from the pot and take it to the beggar. They had to personally distribute their old clothing to those who had none. Or they had to look the women who had been their friend and neighbor in the eye and watch them die from neglect.

Yes it was harsh, yes it was brutal, but for those who responded to the needs of others, it had to have been an incredible grace filled experience to take care of their friends and neighbors in need, where in our society, with all of its' benefits, caring for the poor and marginalized has become a sterile event. We have forgotten that caring for the poor is still a personal responsibility.

We pay our taxes and a large portion of that money goes to the bureaucracy for management and some of that even filters down to the

poor who need it. But for us, there isn't any grace in this act because the confiscation of our resources through taxation isn't voluntary. We have no choice; we pay our taxes or pay our taxes and the penalty for not paying our taxes.

There is grace in supporting charities, in supporting the Church because it is voluntary. No one sells tickets or collects a mandatory fee for any of us to attend Mass even though the lights and air conditioning don't turn on for free. However, if you really want to benefit from charitable acts, go out and do something. If all you can do is remember the poor and marginalized in your daily prayers, that is what you do, in fact, that is something we all should do.

But if you can do more, and most of us can, then you should. Take some of our most precious asset, our time, and go visit the nursing homes. Make a new friend. If you have children, bring them to visit as well. Think about it, when do people confined to a nursing home ever get to see a child? To hear them laugh? To get a big squeeze hug?

Go to the ALMS HOUSE and help feed and cloth the poor. Provide grunt labor to Habitat for Humanity. They always need someone to step and fetch on their projects. Do you have a little bit of land? Start a community garden and distribute the fresh produce through the ALMS HOUSE to feed the poor in our community. Opportunities to be charitable abound, we just have to break away from ourselves to recognize and act upon them.

In the back of your mind you are probably muttering; "Ok, I got the whole charity thing, I hear it all the time, what about this raising from the dead thing? When is the last time that a descendent of the Apostles asked God for and received the favor of raising someone from the dead?" Good question; let's dig into it a little bit.

The Old and New Testaments aren't just stories, the miracles aren't just there to impress us with the power of God. They all tell a fundamental truth that applies directly to us, right here, right now in Hope Mills, North Carolina on this day on 2016. Wherever mankind is in the year 20,016, those stories, those fundamental truths will still apply.

They all lead us to come closer to God, to come closer to our salvation because that is what it is all about. Not more toys, not more power, not more wealth. Some day we will leave all of this behind. Everyone raised from the dead except for Jesus Christ died again. They aren't still running

around as part of a secret society with Elvis Presley as their current leader. They are all gone from this earthly plain.

Miracles still abound in the modern world. Healings at Lourdes, the Visionaries at Medjugorje, the healing of a Nun with Parkinson's attributed to St John Paul II. Just no obviously reanimated corpses; but are we sure?

There are many ways to die and still animate and plow through the day. We can lose hope, die to the presence of God in us and as part of our lives. We can die to those who love us through drugs, alcohol, and criminal acts. We all die the death of sin, the death that burdens the soul everyday of our lives.

We have so many people in our world who are walking dead. They have turned their backs on God, deemed him to be irrelevant in their lives and proceed every day to live focused on their own wants and desires without regard for the consequences of their actions on the people around them and society as a whole.

Then we have those who slaughter innocents either for convenience, because they believe it is their right, or because they see it as the only path to heaven. One group is accepted by our society, the other is not. Neither of them are acceptable in the eyes of God.

So, does Jesus Christ through his servants, the direct descendants of the Apostles, our Bishops, still raise people from death when they prevail upon God to do so? Every single day. Do they have help? Their assistants, the Priests also raise people from death every single day. We call it the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Can we help, those of us who aren't Bishops or Priests, what can we do? We can offer a kind word. We can bring the walking dead to the Church where they can meet with the Priest. We can spread the good news and lead people back to God, back to where they came from.

The marginalized aren't just the poor. It also includes those who have marginalized themselves from life with the Holy Spirit; those who have allowed the allurements of the world to lead them to death. The single greatest act of charity we can perform is to lead a sinner back to Christ. To bring those who are dead because of sin back to God by bringing them to the Church and putting them in contact with the Priest.

Summer is here. Our Sunday obligation doesn't end with the school year. The doors to the Church will open all summer long. Let's spend some of our free time in acts of charity. Let's look for, and take advantage of opportunities to assist the priests and bishops as they bring the walking dead back to life.