

Reflection on Compassion, Hope, and Faith

By Deacon George Kain



The Miracle at Nain

Earlier this week, we read a Gospel passage from Luke where Jesus journeyed to a village called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd accompanied him. As he drew near to the entrance of the town's gate, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. A large crowd was with her. Since he was her only son, she was now left alone.

Her heart would have been filled with a sorrow that is tangible to anyone with empathy. Her heart might also have been filled with fear. At that time, a widow would have had a very difficult time taking care of herself in a rural village. With her husband gone, she would have had to rely upon her son to provide for her as she aged. But now that he was gone, her heart would have not only felt the pain of his loss but also fear for her future. What would become of her? Who would provide food for her year after year? Would she be reduced to begging and poverty?

It is in the context of this very real sorrow and fear that Jesus enters her life. Jesus' encounter with her and her dead son appears to be unplanned and unexpected. What is it that moves Jesus to raise this man from the dead? It appears to be done purely out of Jesus' compassion for this mother. But if we consider the entire context, there might also be a secondary motive.

Since Jesus' miracles were normally performed in response to people's faith, it is most likely that faith was a contributing factor to this miracle. By faith, they knew Jesus would act. Thus, in a very real way, the compassion, hope, and faith of the people traveling with Jesus would have called forth His almighty power to heal, and Jesus responded.

There are many ways to act as mediators of God's grace. One way to do so is by growing in compassion for others as well as hope in God. When we witness the sufferings of others, and allow ourselves to feel compassion for them, manifest hope in the power of God to heal, and then stand there in faith, waiting for God to act, God will be compelled to act. Our holy compassion, hope, and faith act as a prayer to which God always responds. The crowds accompanying Jesus through the village of Nain appear to have acted in this manner and, inspired by their witness, we, too, must act as intercessors for others in the same way.

Let's reflect, today, upon anyone in our lives who resembles this widow of Nain. Who does God want us to notice and to feel compassion for? As our empathetic hearts notice them, let's be open to the supernatural gift of hope. As we do, let us allow that hope to manifest faith in God and offer that compassion, hope, and faith to God as our prayer for those who are most in need.