



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS **GENERAL AUDIENCE** Paul VI Audience Hall

Wednesday, 10 August 2016 [\[Multimedia\]](#)

25. Compassion for a mother (cf Lk 7:11-17)

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

The passage from the Gospel of Luke that we have listened to (7:11-17) presents us with a truly great miracle of Jesus: the resurrection of a young man. However, the heart of this narrative is not the miracle, but Jesus' tenderness toward the mother of this young man. Here, mercy takes the form of great compassion for a woman who had lost her husband and now is accompanying her only son to the cemetery. This deep sorrow of a mother moves Jesus and causes him to perform the miracle of resurrection.

In introducing this episode the Evangelist dwells on many details. At the gate of the small town of Nain — a village — two large groups meet. They come from opposite directions and have nothing in common. Jesus, followed by the disciples and by a large crowd, is about to enter the residential area, while coming out of it is a procession accompanying a dead man, with his widowed mother and many people. At the gate the two groups brush by each other, each going its own way, but it is then that St Luke notes Jesus' feelings: "when the Lord saw her [the woman], he had compassion on her and said to her: 'Do not weep'. And he came and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still" (vv. 13-14). Great compassion guides Jesus' actions: he stops the procession, touches the bier and, moved by profound mercy for this mother, decides to confront the reality of death, so to speak, face to face. And he will confront it definitively, face to face, on the Cross.

During this Jubilee, it would be a good thing if, in passing through the Holy Door, the Door of Mercy, pilgrims were to remember this episode of the Gospel, which occurred at the gate of Nain. When Jesus sees this mother in tears, she enters his heart! Every one arrives at the Holy Door carrying their own life, with its joys and suffering, plans and failures, doubts and fears, in order to present it to the Lord's mercy. We are certain that, at the Holy Door, the Lord comes near to meet each one of us, to bring and offer his powerful consoling words: "Do not weep!" (v. 13). This is the Door of the encounter between the pain of humanity and the compassion of God. Crossing the threshold we fulfil our pilgrimage into the mercy of God who, as to the deceased young man,

repeats to all: “I say to you, arise!” (v. 14). To each of us he says: “Arise!”. God wants us to stand upright. He created us to be on our feet: for this reason, Jesus’ compassion leads to that gesture of healing, to heal us, of which the key phrase is: “Arise! Stand up, as God created you!”. Standing up. “But Father, we fall so often” — “Onward, arise!”. This is Jesus’ word, always. In passing through the Holy Door, let us try to feel this word in our heart: “Arise!”.

The powerful word of Jesus can make us rise again and can bring about in us too the passage from death to life. His word revives us, gives us hope, refreshes weary hearts, opens us to a vision of the world and of life which transcends suffering and death. The inexhaustible treasure of God’s mercy is inscribed for each one on the Holy Door!

Touched by the word of Jesus, “the dead man sat up, and began to speak. And he gave him to his mother” (v. 15). This phrase is so beautiful: it shows Jesus’ tenderness: “he gave him to his mother”. The mother recovers her son. Receiving him from Jesus’ hands she becomes a mother for the second time, but the son who is now restored to her is not the one who received life from her. Mother and son thus receive their respective identities thanks to the powerful word of Jesus and to his loving gesture. Therefore, especially in the Jubilee, Mother Church receives her children, recognizing in them the life given by the grace of God. It is due to this grace, the grace of Baptism, that the Church becomes mother and that each one of us becomes her child.

Before the young man, revived and restored to his mother, “fear seized them all; and they glorified God, saying, ‘A great prophet has arisen among us!’ and ‘God has visited his people!’” (v. 16). What Jesus does is thus not only a saving action intended for the widow and her son, or a gesture of goodness limited to that town. In Jesus’ merciful care, God meets his people, in Him all of God’s grace appears and will continue to appear to mankind.

Celebrating this Jubilee, which I wished to be lived in all the particular Churches, that is in all the churches of the world, and not only in Rome, it is as if all the Church spread throughout the world were joined in one hymn of praise to the Lord. Today too the Church recognizes that she is visited by God. For this reason, by setting out for the Door of Mercy, each one is able to set out for the door of the merciful heart of Jesus: He indeed is the true Door that leads to salvation and restores us to new life. Mercy, both in Jesus and in ourselves, is a journey which starts in the heart in order to reach the hands. What does this mean? Jesus looks at you, he heals you with his mercy, he says to you: “Arise!”, and your heart is new. What does it mean to make a journey from the heart to the hands? It means that with a new heart, with the heart healed by Jesus I can perform works of mercy through the hands, seeking to help, to heal the many who are in need. Mercy is a journey that starts in the heart and ends in the hands, namely in the works of mercy.

I have said that mercy is a journey that goes from the heart to the hands. In the heart, we receive the mercy of Jesus who forgives us everything, because God forgives everything and lifts us up, gives us new life and infects us with his compassion. From that forgiven heart and with the

compassion of Jesus, the journey to the hands begins, namely through the works of mercy. A bishop, the other day, told me that in his cathedral and in other churches he had made entry and exit doors of mercy. “Why did you do this?” — “Because one door is to enter by, to ask forgiveness, and to receive Jesus’ mercy; the other is the door of mercy to exit by, in order to take mercy to others, with our works of mercy”. This bishop is intelligent! Let us also do the same with the journey that goes from the heart to the hands: let us enter the church through the door of mercy, to receive the forgiveness of Jesus, who tells us: “Arise! Go, go!”; and with this “Go!” — on foot — let us leave through the exit door. It is the Church going forth: the journey of mercy which goes from the heart to the hands. Make this journey!

Special greetings:

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today’s Audience, particularly those from England, Malta, Indonesia and the United States of America. With prayerful good wishes that the present Jubilee of Mercy will be a moment of grace and spiritual renewal for you and your families, I invoke upon all of you joy and peace in our Lord Jesus Christ.

I hope that every one may live this Extraordinary Holy Year by fostering the culture of encounter, recognizing the presence of the Lord’s flesh particularly in the poor and in the needy.

Lastly I address a greeting to *young people*, to *the sick* and to *newlyweds*. Last Monday we recalled the figure of St Dominic de Guzmán, whose Order of Preachers is celebrating the eighth centenary of its foundation. May the enlightened word of this Great Saint inspire you, dear *young people*, to listen to and to live Jesus’ teachings; may his inner strength sustain you, dear *sick people*, in times of discomfort; and may his apostolic devotion remind you, dear *newlyweds*, of the importance of Christian education in your family.
