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“Do not weep” (Luke 7:13).

[1 Cor 12:12-14, 27-31a](#); *Luke 7:11-17*

The raising of the son of the widow at Nain establishes Jesus as a prophet as great as Elijah, who raised the son of the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17:17). The raising of Lazarus in John 11:1 ff., sets the scene for Jesus’ own resurrection. The gospel message is that love is stronger than death and that faith in Jesus promises new life beyond the grave.

Every Christian funeral puts this faith to the test. We grieve for our beloved dead by recalling the promise of eternal life made to them at baptism and with every Eucharist they received. We celebrate Christ as a light going forward through the darkness of death to new life. We read the scriptures, like today’s gospel account, believing that we shall see our loved ones again in eternity.

The visible reality we must live in does not dispel the shadow of death or free us from suffering and anxiety. But faith can free us from the paralyzing fear of death that keeps us from risking ourselves in love and in the service of others. The promise of resurrection enables us to live fully here and now, a foretaste of the power of love to overcome the effects of sin and death that intimidate and undermine life.

How much good is never attempted because of fear? How many graces go unused because we decide not to risk taking the initiative in a difficult situation or time of need? Risen life can be experienced now when we follow the prompts of the Spirit to speak and act with courage. Those who have gone before us are a chorus of encouragement: “Don’t be afraid! Love overcomes death. God is present in every

moment and every opportunity to do good!”

As the church moves toward the goal of synodality, the greatest obstacle may be fear of change or loss of confidence that change is even possible. Pope Francis has defined the process of walking and talking together as how we access the Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who guides the church in history. What dispels our fears and instills confidence is the promise that the Spirit is speaking to us through one another. Listening to one another is the miracle that brings new life.

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