

In the name of ✠ Jesus.

Jesus could draw a crowd, no doubt about that! And He still does today! It is the Church. Surely, it is Jesus that draws people to the Church, which is His body. It is the crucified Jesus, still present in His Church, present in His Word and Sacraments that draws people unto Him. Jesus said, *“And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself”* (John 12:32). It’s not the attractive Jesus that draws us to Him, for *“he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him”* (Isa. 53:2). No, Jesus Himself says, it’s the bloody, “lifted up” Jesus that draws us; it’s the despised and rejected Jesus that draws us; it’s the reviled and mocked Jesus that draws us; it’s the ridiculed and laughed at Jesus, who was foolish enough to talk about death as mere sleep and who even more foolishly ordered a little dead girl to get up, that draws us — because she did get up.

What is it that keeps you coming to Church? Is it that you think prosperity will be loosed on you at Church, if only you believe enough? Is it that you are sick physically, and you might figuratively touch Jesus’ garment here and be healed? Is it that you want and need the exhortation to recycle or plant a tree or buy an electric car? Or even legitimately, as St. Paul says, to use *“your abundance at the present time [to] supply [the] need[s]”* of others? For St. Paul does commend the saints in the churches of Macedonia for their generous expression of love *“taking part in the relief of the saints.”* We’re commended, too, when we give generously, coming to the aid, especially, of those of *“the household of faith”* (Gal. 6:10). But, speaking for myself, none of that would motivate me to keep coming to church.

What is it that keeps you coming to Church? I hope you’re coming to Church because here you encounter Jesus for you and for your salvation. You keep coming to Church because here you encounter resurrection and life. Our Gospel text recounts two such encounters.

In today’s Gospel, Jesus had crossed back over the Sea of Galilee to continue His ministry. There, a synagogue ruler by the name of Jairus encountered Him. Jairus’ daughter was deathly ill. *“Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well and live.”* Jesus went with Jairus without hesitation.

But as they were going, a woman with a chronic medical condition, a flow of blood, encountered Jesus. Hers was only the slightest touch, merely of His garment, and yet that touch healed her. More than that, Jesus sought her out, and commended her faith. Her faith motivated her to come to where Jesus was. Her faith motivated her to seek only a touch. And Jesus said, not only that her *“faith has made [her] well,”* but that her faith “saved” her, for Jesus continued: *“go in peace.”* This encounter with Jesus was for her and for her salvation.

This little encounter delayed Jesus a bit, and so word came to them that Jairus' daughter had died. "*Why trouble the Teacher any further?*" The implication was that while Jesus may have been a healer, He surely couldn't raise someone from the dead. But as the encounter with the woman showed, Jesus' interest was not just in the physical — Jesus came for our salvation.

He arrived at Jairus' home and was met with the mourners. They were "*making a commotion and weeping,*" but Jesus told them, "*The child is not dead but sleeping.*" "*And they laughed at him.*"

We might be deterred by such ridicule and laughing — we don't like it. But Jesus is not deterred. He would endure worse ridicule than that; and He knew that for believers "*death is but a slumber*" (LSB938:1). That's why Jesus had said to Jairus: "*Do not fear, only believe.*" And Jairus' faith was not in vain. Jesus spoke a word and the young girl got up — resurrection and life.

These kinds of stories about Jesus and more keep us coming to Church, though, to be sure, there are plenty of people who ridicule and laugh at us for our Biblical beliefs. We proclaim the creation, and people laugh at us for our scientific naïveté. But dear friends, "*Do not fear, only believe,*" for "There is scientific dissent from Darwinism. It deserves to be heard." So say more than 1,000 courageous and impressive-credentialed scientists willing to dispute the so-called "settled science" of origins (dissentfromdarwin.org).

We proclaim salvation through faith in Jesus; we proclaim resurrection and life in Him. We keep coming to Church as we continue to hope in these; yet people laugh at us for our foolishness and gullibility. No one can take your guilt upon Himself, they say, and no one has ever risen from the dead. But we have His promises: "*the LORD [did lay] on [Jesus] the iniquity of us all*" (Isa. 53:6); Jesus is the Lamb of God sacrificed for the sins of the world (John 1:29); and this Lamb does now live in resurrection victory (Rev. 5:6). World laugh all you want; the last laugh will be ours.

Not only that, but even more history is on our side. Jairus' daughter was raised from dead while the cacklings of the "know-it-all" skeptics were still audible outside the house. The widow's son was raised up off his bier in Nain as people looked on and later bore witness. Lazarus did come out of the tomb at Jesus' command. People were there to witness it, too. Then as now, some believed; others hardened their hearts against Jesus; but no one said, "This didn't happen."

And so these narratives give us the courage not to fear, but only believe, as Jesus said. Believe that the Lord will not cast off forever; believe that His steadfast love never ceases; believe that His mercies never end, that His faithfulness is great, that He is good. Believe that Jesus came to win for us salvation in the forgiveness

of our sins. Believe that, as we faithfully come to Church, we encounter Jesus, who by His Word and Sacraments strengthens our faith and assures us that, in this faith, it is done as we believe — we are saved. Believe that, as we come to Church to encounter Jesus, we are built up in hope, not just for this life, but for life eternal, as we wait for our own resurrection and life.

For the Scripture is clear and unequivocal: for believers, death is but a time of sleep. That's what St. Paul says of those who have died in the faith. They have fallen asleep. St. Paul writes, "*[W]e do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.*" Therefore, he says, "*encourage one another with these words*" (1 Thess. 4:14, 18).

Dear saints, let this be your encouragement to keep coming to Church, drawn to Him and His cross, drawn to the One who has defeated sin and death for us, drawn to the One who offers Himself to us here by Word and Sacrament. May neither our fear and timidity nor the world's derision deter us from meeting Jesus here, from knowing our salvation, from hoping in our own resurrection.

In the name of the Father and of the ✝ Son and of the Holy Spirit.