

WHY DO WE DIE?
MEDITATIONS ON ST. LUKE 8:41-56
(Gospel for the 23rd Sunday after Pentecost, 8 November 2015)

By Subdeacon Dr. Joshua D. Genig

In the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

There is a question we all must ask ourselves at some point during our lives: *Why do we die?* Not: Where? Or: When? Or: How? But: Why?

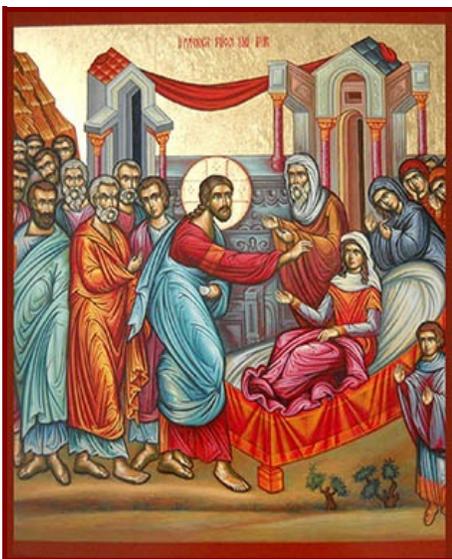
And if you ask most Christians today, the answer is very simple: We die because we sin. In other words, our sin leads to our death. And so if only we could find a way to stop sinning, then maybe, just maybe, we would not die. But if you know anything about the Scriptures, or anything about God and how He created us to be, you know that while most believe that we die because we sin, it is actually the total opposite which is true.



We do not die because we sin, but we sin because we die. More precisely, *we sin because we fear our death.*

And all you have to do is take a good look at your own life to see that this is true. Speaking from experience, nearly every sin we commit is a sin committed out of the fear of our own death. We gossip because we are afraid that we might not live to tell our side of the story. We are envious of others because we are afraid that we will not live to experience the same kind of joy or glory or praise or way of life that others experience. We slander because we are afraid that we might not live to see someone else fall.

The list could go on and on, but the reality is this: deep down, whether we know it or not, every sin committed is a sin committed because we fear our own death.



No, we do not die because we sin, but we sin because we die.

And so this is also true: we can't stop dying just by ceasing to sin.
But we can stop sinning if we simply stop fearing our death.

And so that is the question today: *How do we stop fearing our death?*

Well it seems to me that the Gospel for today is a good place to start, with Jairus' 12-year-old daughter, who tasted death at an age much too young. And if you know anything about children, as so many of you do, you know that children have an inherent ability to trust, to believe, to hope, and, best of all, not to fear. In fact, if you've ever suffered the hell (and that is what it is) of losing a child, or know

someone who has, you know that the death of a child is often more difficult for family and for friends than it is for that child. And that is the case, it would seem, because children have the sort of innocence that frees them from all the sort of grown-up troubles and grown-up fears that come with this grown-up world.

They don't know death the way that we know death. They haven't experienced its sting, and they haven't suffered its loss. And for this reason, children often do not fear death the way that we fear death. Which means that children often do not sin the way that we sin. For children, as I once heard it said, death is experienced as nothing more than a night's sleep.

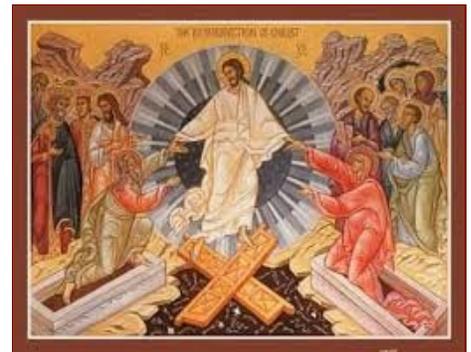


And so it is not merely an accident or a coincidence that the last two resurrection stories that we have heard in the gospels have been resurrections of children: the widow's son at Nain and, today, Jairus' daughter.

And that, I think, is meant to teach us something. It is meant to teach us to see death through the eyes of a child, not as something to be feared, and certainly not as anything scarier than a simple night's sleep. After all, that is of course what Jesus says. "Do not weep," He told the family. "She is not dead, *but sleeping.*"

She is not dead, but sleeping. When we begin to live that way – not fearing our death, not worrying about our death and, even, over time, embracing our death – when we begin to live that way, then one-by-one our sins will begin to pass away as well. When we begin to live that way, then we will be Saints.

But in the meantime take heart in knowing this: Jesus does His best work with those who can't help themselves. Jesus does His best work with the little, the last, the least, the lost, and the dead. And so He does His best work with all of us. He does His best work by entering our world and entering our lives and entering our situations and entering even into our struggles, not leaving us there alone, but coming to our bedside and saying to us as he said to Jairus' daughter: 'child, I say to you, arise.' Literally, 'child, I say to you: *be resurrected.*'



And then He sends us on our way, like Jairus' daughter, off to have something to eat. Then He sends us on our way forgiven and made new, to taste and to see at the table of His Eucharist – to taste and see in His Body and His Blood – that He is indeed the only one who is good and loves mankind.

To this same Jesus Christ be all glory, honor, and worship, together with His Father Who is without beginning, and His All-Holy and Good and Life-Creating Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.