

6JUNE10 Text: John 7:13-15; 14:6 ***“And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, ‘Do not weep.’ Then he came up and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, ‘Young man, I say to you, arise.’ And the dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother.”***

“Jesus said... ‘I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’”

In the early morning hours of **June 6, 1944**, Americans heard about **D-day**—code words for the long-planned British, American, and Canadian action against Hitler. **During the night, over 5,300 ships and 11,000 planes had crossed the English Channel to storm the beaches of Normandy.** The eventual goal of every soldier and civilian involved in that effort was to drive the German military back to Berlin by opening a western front in Europe.

The U.S. entered World War II with neither the infrastructure nor the logistical support necessary to win the war. To overcome this shortage, Americans worked around the clock. Donald Nelson, the chairman of the War Production Board from 1942-44, said, *“The American war-production job was probably the greatest collective achievement of all time.”* **Sixty million Americans mobilized to win the war.** They held concerts and sold war bonds to raise money; rationed foodstuffs and gasoline; and salvaged scrap metal to transform it into machinery. **Civilians produced everything from guns to socks for the men in the field—25 billion rounds of 30-caliber ammunition, over 88,000 tanks, and 460,000,000 pounds of cabbage!** Imagine this: every twenty-four hours, factory workers rolled five new B-26 bombers off of the assembly line! At the Higgins plant in New Orleans, the U.S. work force produced 20,094 newly-conceived landing craft, 1,500 of which put the troops ashore on D-Day at Normandy.

At about 3:00 a.m. on D-Day, with 12-foot waves in the English Channel, Allied troops transferred to these landing craft, some twelve miles off the French coast. British troops headed toward Caen (cahn), the Canadians toward Juno Beach, and the Americans headed toward Utah and Omaha. **For the Americans, the storming of Omaha Beach was a near-suicide mission.** First, a powerful undertow swept away lives and weapons. In addition, they faced a non-stop barrage of bullets from the enemy. **Within ten minutes of landing every officer and sergeant of the 116th Regiment was dead or wounded.** If you have seen the movie “Saving Private Ryan,” then you have a vivid picture of what it was like. And yet, by 10 a.m., as Americans were receiving the first news of D-Day, 300 men had struggled through the mortar

fire, across the body and equipment-strewn beach, and up a bluff to attack the German defenses. By nightfall, the Allies had gained a toehold on the European continent, **yet, on "Bloody Omaha" beach alone, 3,000 Americans lay dead.** From that toehold, the Allied forces would drive Hitler's Nazi army back to Germany and eventually end up winning the war.

Now take that image of a fierce war being waged and apply it to our Gospel lesson today. Imagine the shuddering fear that went up and down the ranks of the demonic forces of death and hell when Jesus Christ confronted their deadliest weapon, death, as if it were nothing at all! Can you picture the funeral procession in your mind's eye? The sad event is taking place in the small town of Nain. A widow has lost her only son. Jesus is filled with compassion as He sees the weeping widow. He touches the funeral bier which carries the body of her dead son and the mourners and the bearers stop walking. And as the crowd watches in hushed silence, Jesus says, **"Young man, I say to you, arise."** Can you imagine at that very moment, what the people in the crowd were thinking when the dead man sat up and began to speak and Jesus gave him back to his mother?!? Imagine what took place in the ranks of sin and Satan as Jesus performed this miracle! **Jesus raised a man from the dead by merely speaking a word and it happened!** Imagine confronting death like this and demonstrating such complete authority and lordship over the enemy's fiercest weapon!

Yes, the raising of the widow's son from Nain, the raising of Jairus' daughter, and the raising of Lazarus were all signs that Satan's stranglehold of sin and death on this world was coming to an end. And when our Lord Jesus Christ hung dying on the cross for the sins of the world, how Satan and his evil hosts must have been doing cartwheels of joy! Their great enemy—the One who stopped a funeral procession in its tracks and raised that young man—was now Himself nearly dead! **But their joyful triumph as the very dead Christ was laid into that borrowed tomb was short-lived!** On Easter morning, Christ rose from the dead and totally, once and for all, smashed their arsenal of death to smithereens. **There are no weapons left in Satan's arsenal.** Can He accuse us of sin? No! **Sin has been atoned for** as Christ took yours and mine and the sins of the world to the cross. Can He dangle before us the fear of death? No! **Death has been defeated** as Christ broke the bonds of death and was raised to life again on the third day. By Christ's atoning death and by His glorious resurrection, He has **gained the victory** and He has **won the war** on our behalf and for everyone. How does the victory Jesus won become ours? **A miracle took place in your life**

and mine in Holy Baptism: you and I were baptized into Jesus' victory! We died with Christ and we were raised to new life with Christ! We, like that widow's young son from Nain, were **raised from a state of spiritual death to spiritual life** by the power of the Word joined to the water of our baptism. In that washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:4-8), we became sons and daughters in the family of God, brothers and sisters in Christ, heirs of heaven, partners in the Gospel ministry Christ entrusted to His Church and to relate to our opening illustrations, **we become soldiers of the cross, on active duty in the Church Militant, the Church on earth in a constant state of war against sin and Satan.** Yes, make no mistake about, even though the war has been won by Jesus Christ, there are still many battles to be fought. Brought

FROM DEATH TO LIFE...WE NOW FOLLOW CHRIST

He is our Captain; He is our Commander-in-Chief; He is our Leader. Are you ready, soldier?

Dear graduates and dear brothers and sisters in Christ, we live in a world embroiled in a number of battles. There is the battle to cap the gushing oil well in the Gulf of Mexico and save the environment and the way of life along the Gulf coast. There is the battle against the ongoing threat of terrorism and radical jihadists and a host of evildoers in our world today who delight in death and bloodshed. There is the ongoing culture war here in our nation that is tearing at the fabric of our society as contradictory ideas and philosophies seek to gain the upper hand or maintain the high ground. And above and beyond all these battles, there is the supreme battle to which each of us called to: **the spiritual battle for the salvation of the world.** In this battle, as in every battle we face in our lives, **Christ is our Leader.** He is the **Way**; He is the **Truth**; He is the **Life!**

As Christians, we are bombarded by a daily barrage of messages from the media, from advertising, from popular culture and often these messages can tempt us to **walk down other paths** than the path of God's Word, paths that lead us to places we don't want to end up. **As those who have been brought from death to life, we now follow Christ** who says to us: *"Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few."* (Matthew 7:13, 14) Jesus is the Way and the way that Jesus has opened up for us is **wide enough** for each and every person in the world. There are **none** who are **excluded** from the salvation God freely offers to all in the word of the Gospel. And yet, having said that, the way is also **narrow**...as narrow as Jesus. He is the Way, the **only Way.**

One of the favorite strategies that an enemy uses in warfare is **misinformation**. A campaign of misinformation means that one side circulates lies to divert one's enemy away from the truth. It is certainly no different in our spiritual battles as we wage war in the Church Militant. Satan, the father of lies as he is called in Holy Scripture, seeks to lead soldiers of the cross, people like you and me, away from Christ as he offers us lies instead of God's truth. In this regard, the devil's strategy has not changed one bit from when he successfully tempted our first parents into sin in the Garden long ago. They believed Satan's lies and we are still reaping the fruit of that **As those who have been brought from death to life, we now follow Christ** who is not only the **Way** but also the **Truth**. He speaks to us the truth of the Father and reveals the Father to us. The Holy Spirit comforts and strengthens soldiers of the cross like you and me with the Word of God and its truth and creates that new and holy desire to follow the truth of God's Word in all we do. It is as the psalmist once wrote: *"Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for You I wait all the day long."*

Finally, what is a war when one side has the power to heal every casualty and raise every fatally wounded soldier back to life? How would the opposing side have any hope of victory? The truth of the matter is that in the spiritual battles we wage as soldiers of the cross, we are on the winning side and Satan and his hosts know that. **That is why there are such furious battles all around us in our culture...the prince of this world has limited time and he knows it.** He continues to rage against everything that is good and godly. But let us never forget that **our** Captain is **the Lord of Life, Jesus Christ**, who is Himself, not only the Way and the Truth, **but also the Life!** For our failures He brings forgiveness, for our weakness He brings strength, for our doubts He brings faith, for our fears He brings hope and for our dying He brings life, abundant life, resurrection life, eternal life. that **As those who have been brought from death to life, we now follow Christ** as He gives us life in the face of death itself!

BROUGHT FROM DEATH TO LIFE (dear graduates) (dear brothers and sisters in Christ), WE NOW FOLLOW CHRIST as we leave this place. **We go out as soldiers of the cross to a variety of battlefields. Are you ready, soldier?** Remember that we follow a Captain who has already won the war for us! He is the Way, the Truth, and the **Life**, yes, especially the Life...as the widow from Nain and her son once discovered long ago! Amen.

SDG