

A REFLECTION BY THE SON OF THE WIDOW OF NAIN

Only Child

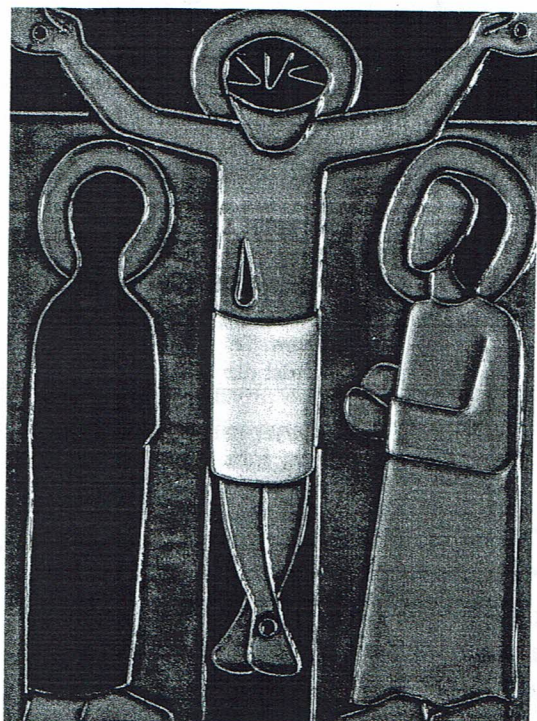
Dermot Connolly

*The dead man sat up and began to speak,
and Jesus gave him to his mother.
(Luke 7:11-17; 1 Kings 17:8-24; John 19:26-27;
Deut 6:6-7)*

“I’m told there were two large crowds that met at my funeral. Half of Nain had come to support my mother; she a widow, and I her only child. And it seems there was another ‘large crowd’ that day – followers of Jesus who had arrived with him just as my funeral left the gate of the town. Some things I can only tell as they were afterwards told to me.

“For Jesus, this seems to have been an emotional encounter; ‘gut-wrenching’ is the word. Perhaps he was reminded of his own mother, if anything should happen to him? He stood beside my corpse, where the two groups had gathered, where my mother was. ‘Don’t cry!’ Jesus said to her, and a quietness spread to the edge of the crowd.

“Then he called out to me, ‘Young man, I say to you, rise!’ and the wonder was that I heard him, and got up and stood, dazzled, not knowing what to say but unable to shut up. Jesus had to push me to my mother, who was laughing, crying, reaching, clutching – not lost, not alone!



**The Rosary:
The Sorrowful
Mysteries. The
Crucifixion and
Death of Jesus.**
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“Everyone was of the same mind: this was what a prophet would do! Hadn’t the great Elijah done as much in the days of the kings for another widow and her dead boy at Zarephath? That lad too had been given back to his mother, but he was only little; she’d had the minding of him for many years, before he was grown into the man-of-the-house and could take care of her.

“I owe my life to Jesus in more senses than one, but I could not follow him. I took it that my place was at home; to love and to honour my family, and in the end to bury my dead. I had been awakened to a new old life, my duty, my care; and given back to my mother. So, I never did go journeying with Jesus. But Nain is not far from Nazareth, and soon enough we heard he had turned his face to Jerusalem and whatever awaited him there. His hour had come.

“I’m an old man now, my mother long dead, my wife with me, and our family. We follow the Way of our risen Lord – the same Jesus who brought me back to life. And as best we can, we gather and remember and re-tell the stories of the Lord, all that he said and did – lest they be forgotten. It’s a thing our people have done for centuries: *Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them.*

“One story had strange echoes for me: a death at Zarephath, a funeral at Nain, and a cross at Jerusalem – as if the actors were exchanging parts and replaying the same drama:

When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, ‘Woman, here is your son.’

*Then he said to the disciple, ‘Here is your mother.’
And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.*

“But there is more to this than the restoring of life and the care of the bereaved. These two unnamed people – the disciple whom Jesus loved, and Jesus’ own mother – were alive at his side as he died a criminal death. They, and just a few others, mostly women, were his most faithful witnesses. Was Jesus forming a new family? Would I find a home there?” ■

Fr Dermot Connolly spent many years in Nigeria and now works in the District of Ireland.