

The Sacred Heart of Jesus is a symbol of the fidelity of the love of God. It is a reminder to us that God loves us unconditionally with a love we cannot earn or ever be worthy. And he loves us for ourselves, not as we should be.

St. Paul had preached to the Gentiles the “good news” of that love - that there is complete forgiveness of sin in Jesus Christ, there is liberation from the power of evil in Jesus Christ, there is unending life that comes from faith and fidelity to Jesus Christ.

As he went about his mission, it seems that some extremist Jewish-Christians would follow him like a religious SWAT team and were making demands to his converts.

The first being that the gentile converts still needed to observe the Jewish rituals of circumcision and other Jewish institutions to receive full salvation in Christ. They were all part of the package.

Further, they claimed that Paul’s authority was secondary since he was not one of the original Twelve and had joined the work of the Church after the Lord’s Ascension.

When the claims of these extremists came to Paul’s attention, he “went ballistic” as we would say today. When he heard that some of his Galatian converts were actually accepting these claims, he wrote this letter.

Last week, we heard his strong words about their uncritically accepting “another gospel.” At the heart of Paul’s concern was his refusal to allow anything to diminish the power of the Cross of Christ.

The redemption that we have in Jesus needs no supplementation or boost. It is final, complete and universal. Jesus Christ alone gives eternal life. Jesus Christ alone gives supernatural life. Jesus Christ alone gives new life from the death of sin.

In the incident in today’s Gospel reading in the little town of Naim, Jesus shows himself to be the Lord of life. In this, he shows the compassion of his Sacred Heart but he is also giving us a glimpse of heaven, where all the faithful are healed and brought to life.

This young man would surely have to die one day, and yes, there would be tears, but also consolation from their experience in Naim because they now know he is the author of all life. If he raised him here, he would surely do so in the life to come.

+Diane Komp is a pediatric oncologist--that is, she treats children who have cancer. A highly trained physician, she used to be an agnostic. That was before

Anna died. Anna was a little girl who had leukemia, in the days when recovery was rare. As death came close, her parents and Dr. Komp gathered at her bedside.

“Before she died,” Dr. Komp writes, “Anna mustered the final energy to sit up in her hospital bed and say, ‘The angels--they’re so beautiful, can you see them mom? Do you hear them singing? They’re so beautiful.’ And then she lay back on her pillow and died.” That is what the miracle at Naim was pointing to for all of us who grieve the death of one we love so very much. They will rise.

Jesus continues bring life in so many ways: It's a shocking and awesome thing when the dead sit up and begin to speak. I have known people who have been dead, if not physically, in some manner all their lives.

They go through the motions of living, yet are dead spiritually, or socially, or intellectually, or emotionally. Then one day by the grace of God, their lives are touched by he who gives all life and the fullness of love. They rise in a new way of living.

Have we experienced his life-giving touch? Have we been to our own Naim? When we part company with sinful activity and accept Christ's Gospel, we have been to Naim.

When we find consolation beginning to come into our life after the death of a loved one, we have been to Naim. When we see another person for whom we have grieved make a turn in their life from death-dealing behavior to new life, we have been to Naim.

When we say that Jesus is the Lord of life we include not only life beyond the grave but new life here and now. We face, however, the same danger as the Galatians. We must take care that nothing diminishes the power and full sufficiency of Christ's Cross in our life.

Our belief is that every novena we pray, every religious article we venerate, every saint we invoke will draw us nearer to Jesus Christ and to his saving power. There is no bypass around the Cross nor shortcuts through our saints. Please tell that to our fundamentalist friends who like to accuse otherwise.

We are in complete agreement that there are not multiple roads to salvation. All salvation comes through Jesus Christ. Every saint we invoke has been redeemed by Jesus Christ. At the center of our life as Christians must always be the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

There was a custom in some cultures whereby they would place a representation of a human skull as a reminder of our mortality with the words, “Even in Paradise, death is present.” That is uplifting! Not! Today's Gospel

could carry the words “Whatever the death or dying we may experience, Jesus is present with new life.” Much better!

The Cross of Christ which St. Paul always exalts is not a symbol of death but of life. In Jesus Christ we have been set free from all the powers that can destroy the soul and mind.

The Sacred Heart of Jesus’s love flows to us from his cross, a reminder of his unending love for us. In the cross, we see the Sacred Heart. The cross should be the organizing principle of our life as the point to which everything leads and from which everything else flows.

The Cross is our Naim where we receive the touch of life from Christ, the author of all life.