

Take a look at the world around us and see the irony of so much death and so much life coexisting together.

Monte Cassino is a monastery in Italy that was established by St. Benedict over 1500 years ago. Throughout its history the monastery has been destroyed many times by fire, earthquake, and war; yet every time it was rebuilt to appear more beautiful than before. This history is captured in the monastery's coat of arms, An oak tree that has been cut down lying next to its stump; growing out of the stump are new branches bearing new green leaves. Under the image are the words, "Cut down it comes to new life."

This coat of arms resonates with both the Old Testament reading from the First Book of Kings and the Gospel reading from the writer Luke. Both scripture passages deal with death and also life. Elijah and Jesus have both raised someone from the dead. Both have brought life but with a difference. In the story of Elijah, the widow who brought him into her home loses her son and thinks that this man of God is punishing her for her past sins; But Elijah

takes the boy into his room, offers prayers to God in hopes that the boy will be revived, and God does it.

In Luke's gospel Jesus meets the widow outside the city gates of Naim. Jesus addresses the deceased boy, "Young man I tell you, arise!" and then returns the boy to his mother.

This miracle, done by Jesus' own power, is a sign of things still yet to come. The real celebration of resurrection from the dead will come when Christ himself is raised from the dead and it doesn't stop there because one day we all will share in the new and glorious life.

What Jesus is calling all of us to do is not fall victim to what Pope John Paul II referred to as the 'Culture of Death' that has gripped our world. Christ is calling us to avoid all that is negative and pessimistic about our world. When we do fall victim to the less than perfect world of ours, Christ calls us to have hope and rise above all that holds us down. Maybe anger and frustration has latched onto our thoughts and controls us, or our life is being

defines by our material desires which in turn blinds us to the needs of our brothers and sisters. It might be our weakness for alcohol, drugs or some other dependency that imprisons us and pulls us farther away from our faith in Jesus Christ. These deadly attractions infiltrate our living situations and render us lifeless. That is why we need Christ and his victory over death and despair. By anchoring ourselves to this beacon of light, we can take Christ with us into the darkness of this world so that when we become drained and broken by our weaknesses and failures, we can turn our attention to the hope that comes with resurrection and new life. Like the Oak tree in Monte Cassino's coat of arms, we may have been cut down but the branches of new life are there ready to lift us up in order that we can start again.