When we hear stories like we hear in our readings today about people being raised from the dead, or resuscitated, it’s hard not to be amazed and wonder to ourselves, “What would I do?” Or “How would I react if I saw or experienced something like that for myself?” I’ll be honest with you, if I experienced something like that I would probably freak out even though, through faith, I am fully aware of the power of God. But do we notice the “little miracles” in our lives that are maybe not quite as dramatic? And even though not as dramatic, are they any less remarkable? I say the answer is no! Even though we may overlook them or may not notice them right away, these “little miracles” are still miracles: the collision of the supernatural world with the natural world. In these occurrences, big or small, dramatic or not, God makes Himself known to us out of Love and compassion in order to give us hope and to receive His mercy in order to draw us back to Him. I think that is nothing short of remarkable!

Our First Reading and Gospel are parallel stories of a dead son being revived and brought back to life for a widowed mother through the intercession to God of prophets: Elijah and Jesus respectively. It would be easy to look at these two readings and conclude that they are merely showing us the awesome and ultimate power of God over life and death. And that is true to a certain extent but these readings and all of the readings today are trying to make us see that as wonderful and awesome as the power of God is, it is His Love, compassion, gift of hope and mercy that are at the center of these great events.

To be a widow in these times meant that these women would be without status or means of livelihood unless they had heirs to take care of them. In both of these stories, even their only male heirs have died leaving
them utterly destitute and without hope. In both cases the prophetic nature of Elijah and Jesus are on full display. Each of them beseeches the Father out of compassion and love to show these women mercy and to give them hope. Ultimately though, these miracles are not as much about raising the sons from the dead, as they are a gift of mercy to the mothers and those around them to see the hand of God at work in their lives in a real and tangible way in order to lead them to a deeper faith. This is what the nature of miracles is all about: the natural world and the supernatural world colliding in order to bolster our faith and guide us to God! We often think that a miracle has to be something grandiose or spectacular to be a miracle, that a miracle can’t take place often and in little and somewhat ordinary ways. The truth is that miracles happen often and to each of us and are signs of God mercy. And these little miracles, that seem less significant, are no less profound in bolstering our faith and pointing us more directly to God! Let me try to illustrate my point.

This past week was a bit rough for me. I reinjured my knee while trying to catch up on the millions of projects we had going on at home. Meanwhile, as the grass has continued to grow uncontrollably, our mower died and it appeared the fix was going to be costly and involved. On top of all of this I had work issues and a homily to prepare for this weekend and I didn’t know how any of this was going to play out or get done. I had a country song in the works in my life and the only thing missing was our dog running away, which he proceeded to do for a short while after my knee incident. I was overwhelmed and prayed for some divine intervention, to our Mother Mary and to Jesus directly! Then on Wednesday afternoon, our neighbor without prompting mowed our entire lawn to give us a little extra time. Then on Thursday, I went to the doctor and got relief for my knee. Then the part I needed for the mower came in and while attempting to do a simple patch-work, hold-us-for-the-time-being sort of repair, the rod that got sucked in the engine that was probably going to cause catastrophic damage soon, showed itself and I was able to remove it after an hour of work on my newly fixed knee. These are silly things and are so minor compared to the news that day and week, let alone compared with those who were struggling with “real” problems. But I realized that although not as spectacular as being brought back from the dead, mercy was shown to me in the form of simple little miracles that were very real.
and necessary. I was smiling from ear to ear and stopped to say a prayer of thanksgiving for being delivered, if only for a moment, from the things that left me struggling with doubt and some despair.

After I took a victory lap around the yard on the newly fixed mower I went inside and said my evening prayers. And I want to share with you the reading for the evening of that day. It is from the First Letter of Peter and it says.

“There is cause for rejoicing here. You may for a time have to suffer the distress of many trials; but this is so that your faith, which is more precious than the passing splendor of fire-tried gold, may by its genuineness lead to praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ appears. Although you have never seen him, you love him, and without seeing you now believe in him and rejoice with inexpressible joy touched with glory because you are achieving faith’s goal, your salvation.” (1 Peter 1:6-9)

Folks, the message in our readings today is that it is God’s mercy that is at the source of all miracles and these miracles are given to us in order to give us hope, strengthen our faith and draw us back to Him. Big or small the gifts of miracles are real whether we wish to rationalize them away as coincidences or simply as part of the natural order of life. Our challenge however, is to see these occurrences, these “little miracles” as it were, as the hand of God offering us help as a sign of His constant presence. In this way we can understand and say like the witnesses in our Gospel today, “God has visited His people.” Oh yah, and as a final note, I think I was given all of this in order to finish this homily as well: yet another “little miracle” of mercy!