

SEPTEMBER 16 2025 FATHER ROSHAN LOY D'SOUZA

Not long ago, I heard the story of a small-town fire chief. One night a house went up in flames. The fire chief was one of the first on the scene. As he arrived, he saw a mother outside the burning house, screaming that her little boy was still trapped inside. Without a moment's hesitation, he ran straight into the smoke and fire. Moments later, he came out carrying the child in his arms.

Later, a reporter asked him: *"What gave you the courage to risk your life like that?"* He said, *"I didn't think about myself. I just saw that mother's face, her tears, her helplessness—and I knew I had to act."*

That story could almost serve as a commentary on today's readings. Both St. Paul's letter to Timothy and the Gospel of Luke remind us that true leadership and true discipleship are not about status or power. They are about compassion. They are about integrity. They are about seeing the suffering of others and responding as Christ would.

In the first reading, Paul is giving Timothy some very practical advice. He describes what kind of person is fit to serve as bishop or deacon. And it's striking what Paul does *not* say; "Find the most talented speaker" or "Choose the one with the most influence or wealth." Instead, he lists qualities of character:

- a bishop must be temperate, self-controlled, gentle, not quarrelsome.
- a deacon must be dignified, trustworthy, faithful at home.

In other words, leadership in the Church is not about climbing a ladder of prestige. It's about being steady, reliable, humble servants of God's household. The Church is not a corporation; it is a family, and those who serve as leaders must live lives that inspire trust and reflect Christ's love.

That's true not just for bishops and deacons. Every one of us, in our own vocation—whether as parents, grandparents, teachers, volunteers—are called to lead with integrity.

The Gospel gives us a living image of that leadership in the person of Jesus. We see a heartbreaking scene: a funeral procession leaving the town of Nain. A widow is burying her only son. In that culture, this is not only grief—it is social and economic devastation. With her husband gone and now her son dead, she faces a future with no support, no security, no hope.

And here's the turning point: *“When the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her.”*

That word “compassion” in the Gospel is strong—it literally means his heart was moved in his very depths. Jesus does not remain a distant observer. He feels her pain. He steps forward. He touches the coffin. And he says, *“Young man, I tell you, rise.”*

And life returns. The son is restored. And just as important—the mother is restored, her hope is restored.

The crowd recognizes what has happened: *“God has visited his people!”* That's what the compassion of Jesus does—it makes God's presence real in a moment of despair.

A true Christian leader is meant to look like Jesus at Nain:

- Someone who *notices* the suffering of others.
- Someone who allows themselves to be moved with compassion.
- Someone who responds, bringing life, hope, and healing.

That's what makes leadership in the Church credible—not titles, not degrees, not ceremonies—but compassion lived out in integrity.

And it's not just about the ordained. Parents are leaders in their families. Teachers lead their students. Parish volunteers lead ministries. All of us, in some way, are called to guide others. And our credibility does not come from being the smartest or the most skilled—it comes from living with integrity and being moved by compassion. Amen.

So what does this mean for us today?

First, we are called to pray for our bishops, priests, and deacons—that they may live up to St. Paul's description, that their leadership may be marked by integrity and compassion.

Second, we are called to examine our own leadership roles. In my family, at my workplace, in my parish—do I lead with compassion, or with control? Do I inspire trust, or do I create fear?

Third, we are invited to let Jesus do for us what he did for the widow and her son.

All of us have areas in our lives that feel lifeless—relationships that seem broken, dreams that seem dead, faith that feels cold.

Christ still comes near. He still touches what is lifeless. He still says: “*Rise.*” And when that happens, people around us can say what the crowd in Nain said: “*God has visited his people.*”

May we, like Christ, become people whose integrity and compassion bring life to others. *Amen.*