

## **Thirteenth Sunday of Ordinary time June 28, 2015**

Wisdom 1:13-15; 2:23-24; 2 Corinthians 8:7, 9, 13-15; Mark 5:21-43

The virtue of faith and the necessity of faith is the dominating theme of today's readings. Faith is our personal response to a God who continues to reveal himself to us and invites us to recognize his holiness and beauty. Bible shows us the ways in which God reveals himself to human persons and invites him to respond in faith. Every situation in the world presents a very great contrast between human powerlessness in the face of sickness and death on the one hand, and the striking force of faith on the other. We are in a constant relationship with a God of wonder who transforms us, heals us and removes our pains and transforms them into joy. Faith works miracles and there are the thousands of small miracles that no-one notices them except those concerned. Certainly people are aware of the work of the power of God in human situation. In this rational world we need the spiritual insight to recognize the working of these miracles. But faith is there like a small seed which when planted in the human heart grows slowly to yield fruit. Today's readings invite us to reflect on how profoundly faith influences our view of the world and our actions. In the first reading from the Book of Wisdom, the wise teacher reminds us that we are all created in the image of God. We are also surrounded by gifts that will finally lead us to heaven. In the second reading Paul encourages the people of Corinth to be generous to the poor in Jerusalem. The generosity of Jesus is their model and motivation. In the Gospel faith brings new life to the Synagogue Official's daughter and to a woman who was suffering for twelve years. She only touched the garments of Jesus and she was healed.

The First Reading from the Book of Wisdom reminds us that we are all created in the image and likeness of God. Our calling is to enjoy eternal life in God's presence. The created world guides us along the path of life as long as we see creation for what it is and it will always remain a beautiful gift of God for us. The author can boldly declare that there is nothing that harmful or destructive in creation. The Book of Genesis tells us that God created everything that is good. In fact the word good is repeated seven times. God created us for incorruption and made us in His own image so we may inherit His Kingdom. In other words, God created the world in and of itself and should not separate us from God either in this world or in the next. The author of the Book of Wisdom says that God did not make death, and he does not delight in the death of the living. For he created all things so that they might exist; the generative forces of the world are wholesome, and the dominion of Hades is not on earth. For righteousness is immortal. The death he speaks of is not physical death but spiritual death. Further we all know that the kind God takes no pleasure in the extinction of the living. He loves them all. If the wicked inherit spiritual death, it is because they invite it upon themselves. But man can avoid spiritual death, as he is being called to inherit the Kingdom of God. This kingdom becomes alive for us in Jesus. The author says that the righteousness that we receive from God itself is immortal.

St Paul in the Second Reading reminds the Corinthians how Jesus, rich though he was became poor for our sake, to make them all rich out of his poverty. Naked and destitute on the cross he poured out his love on us. He even gave his life that we might have life. And because of that he, too, lives forever. And we have been immeasurable enriched. Paul gives that as a model for the way that the Corinthians should share whatever they can spare for their poorer brothers in other churches. He calls it a gracious act because he views the collection as a grace from God. Interestingly, he says that in sharing with others we are not expected to give away what we genuinely need ourselves but only from our surplus. When

we share our surplus today with someone in greater need, we ourselves can hope to be treated in the same way in our own hour of need. Part of our healing is in the wholeness of our communities, a wholeness which is based on truth, love, compassion and a deep sense of justice for all. And this, too, is holiness, because God is an integral part of the wholeness. He is recognized as the Creator, the Conserver and the Final Goal of all that I am and can be, of all that we are and can be. Jesus is the model for his people and his generosity made him give up all the riches he had and take on the poverty of human life and death.

The Gospel consists of two related stories, with one inside the other, a typical feature of Mark. It is a literary art or device known as intercalation or sandwiching. Both stories then play off one another by parallels, contrasts and even ironies. They are held together by theme or one of the characters in the stories. Here we have the story of Jairus a synagogue leader, pleading with Jesus to come and heal his sick daughter. Into this story is inserted another incident about a nameless woman long suffering haemorrhages who secretly touches the garment of Jesus with a hope of being cured. Finally the focus moves back to the story of the synagogue leader with a sick daughter. Both the miracles tell us about the faith in Jesus. Jesus is the one who holds both stories together. He is approached by Jairus, an official of the synagogue, probably well to do and a public figure. His daughter is seriously ill and he wants Jesus to come and lay his hands on her "to make her better and save her life". It was something unusual that a leader should ask this favour when much opposition was brooding around him. However Jesus, who always seeks to do well to others sets out to Jairus' house and is followed by a huge crowd. Thus reaching out to the synagogue leader who had faith in him, Jesus raised his twelve year old daughter back to life. As he had done with Lazarus, Jesus gave life to the little girl that had crossed over to death.

In the Gospel we also heard how a woman who is anonymous, poor, isolated from the synagogue and most social contact. While Jairus is able to come forward boldly and plead with Jesus to come to his house and heal his little girl, the woman who is sick makes a quiet attempt to reach close to Jesus and touch his garment secretly. What is interesting is that both the synagogue official and the woman who was sick are taken up with fear after they have approached Jesus. Still both are convinced through faith that Jesus has the power to cure all illness. The nameless woman is healed of twelve years of haemorrhages, simply by touching the clothes of the Lord Jesus. Her deep faith made her well and the healing was immediate. Mark tells us that she suffered for twelve years before turning to Jesus. She had endured much under many physicians and obviously drained her of all her financial resources. Jesus was her last hope, her only hope. Nothing in the physical world could heal her. Only a miracle from Jesus did the healing for her. Jesus was there for her when she needed Him the most, after much suffering. Like many others, she had heard about Jesus and, moved by a deep faith in him, she believed that if she could just touch the hem of his cloak it would be enough for her to be healed. In fact, she does just that and she is healed instantly. Her faith and trust in the power of Jesus has healed her completely. Her faith in Jesus makes her a new person.

We are also surprised at the dramatic episode with Jesus. Generally the miracles of Jesus are done quietly and even done in public he avoided all publicity. Here Mark tells us that Jesus turned round and asked the crowd who it was that touched my clothes. He knew that power had gone out from him and the healing was done. The disciples remind Jesus that he was surrounded by hundreds of people around him, trying to listen to him and how could he just ask who touched him. The question of Jesus makes the woman to come forward to make a public confession about her behaviour and announced the good result which she knew it had

already produced. She was afraid because she should not have been there at all because of the religious law. That was the reason why she could not approach him openly in the first place. Her bleeding problem made her unclean and, if the people around had known about it, she would have been in deep trouble. For all purposes she was an outcast person. Now Jesus performs a great miracle. He restores her to normal life in society. There is no anger or indignation on his part. Instead he affectionately calls her: "My daughter," and tells her that her faith had restored her to health. She sends her away with good news to go in peace and be free from her complaint forever. Her faith had healed her to the full.

We now return to the first story which is equally important. Here Jairus is told by some messengers that his daughter had already died and that there was no need to bother Jesus any further. Jesus was known to be a healer but not as a person who would bring a dead person back to life. But Jesus gives them new assurance. He says "Do not be Afraid," a word used more than 350 times in the Bible. Further he asks them to believe in him. Once he reached the house he gives them further assurance that the girl is only sleeping and she is not dead. They laugh at his comment. With the master sends everyone out of the house and goes into the house with just the parents and his three close companions, Peter, James and John. He takes the girl by the hands and tells her: "Little girl, I tell you to get up." And the 12-year-old girl immediately got up and walked around quite normally, as if nothing had been wrong with her. Those words of Jesus "get up", brings the girl back to life and at the same time indicates his power over death that he is the resurrection and life. Jesus ordered them not to speak about it and also asks them to give her something to eat. All were amazed with his healing power. He is the one who controls life and has power over death. He restores her to the parents and asks them to total care starting from food. Both of these stories, with one, as it were, enfolded in the other reveal Jesus as the source of life and healing.

Ultimately the synagogue official's daughter is cured as is the woman with the haemorrhages. At the same time their fear has been overcome with faith. In both cases it is the faith that brings about the healing. Again both stories are about more than just healing miracles. On a deeper level, both stories are telling us of Jesus granting them new life. The woman is now reinstated into the community without any hindrance and the little girl is brought back to life from death and given back to her parents. In a real way they are the resurrection stories. Even the gesture that Jesus makes by lifting up the girl has the resurrection overtones. On the practical level, both the girl and the woman experience a new fullness of life. They are referred to as "daughter" but now they have the potential to be part of the greater community. Both the stories teach important lessons about the power of faith.

Today's Gospel tells us about the divine power and infinite mercy of Jesus. Apart from proving his claim to be the promised Messiah, all his miracles had as their aim and their end to remove the pain and sufferings of human persons. He did not perform any miracle for the sake of astonishing people or to satisfy idle curiosity of people. Each one was performed to help someone in distress. All who were helped by his miracle of mercy had one thing in common, namely, they were motivated by faith in him and trusted fully in his mercy and power. For instance we see the leper in the gospel of Matthew who expressed his sentiments saying, "Lord, if only want to, you can heal me." Here in the case of Jairus it was the relatives and friends of the girl who showed the faith and confidence in him. In the case of unnamed woman it was her faith made her touch him and her courage made her accept the transformation in her. Jesus through his miracles gave of himself and has asked us to give of ourselves. He asked those who have an abundance to share their wealth with those in need so that those who have little do not have too little. With that little extra that they receive through

the love of their Christian brothers and sisters, they too can live a decent life above the poverty level. Let us pray today to Jesus as Lord of life and ask him to help us reach that level of health, wholeness and holiness to which he is calling us.

Once in a small town a curious case came up in the court. An elderly man had been caught stealing two loaves of bread. He was presented before the magistrate who conducted the full hearing in the presence of 120 people who had come curiously to listen to the judgment. The man gave the reason that his wife, three children and elderly parents were starving and he was unemployed. He had no money to buy bread to feed his starving family. After questioning and listening to the arguments, the judge was very angry and said this was a terrible crime and the man must be fined and he set a fine of Rupees one hundred. The accused thief was ashamed and put down his head as he had no money to pay. The Judge then did a strange thing. He quietly took out his purse and pulled out a hundred Rupee note and told the officer to accept the payment on behalf of the accused. Then he raised the voice and said it is something more criminal when a man without job had to steal bread to feed the family while 120 are wasting their time to watch the fun. All those present are fined one Rupee per head and asked the officer to collect the amount. He handed over that money to the accused man to buy food and told him to come next day and he would get him a job. It was truly a miracle in the life of a man who had secured a new life.

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