

GOSPEL

MARK 5:21-43

When Jesus had crossed in the boat to the other side, a large crowd gathered round him and he stayed by the lakeside. Then one of the synagogue officials came up, Jairus by name, and seeing him, fell at his feet and pleaded with him earnestly, saying, ‘My little daughter is desperately sick. Do come and lay your hands on her to make her better and save her life.’ Jesus went with him and a large crowd followed him; they were pressing all round him.

Now there was a woman who had suffered from a haemorrhage for twelve years; after long and painful treatment under various doctors, she had spent all she had without being any the better for it, in fact, she was getting worse. She had heard about Jesus, and she came up behind him through the crowd and touched his cloak. ‘If I can touch even his clothes,’ she had told herself ‘I will be well again.’ And the source of the bleeding dried up instantly, and she felt in herself that she was cured of her complaint. Immediately aware that power had gone out from him, Jesus turned round in the crowd and said, ‘Who touched my clothes?’ His disciples said to him, ‘You see how the crowd is pressing round you and yet you say, “Who touched me?”’ But he continued to look all round to see who had done it. Then the woman came forward, frightened and trembling because she knew what had happened to her, and she fell at his feet and told him the whole truth. ‘My daughter,’ he said ‘your faith has restored you to health; go in peace and be free from your complaint.’

While he was still speaking some people arrived from the house of the synagogue official to say, ‘Your daughter is dead: why put the Master to any further trouble?’ But Jesus had overheard this remark of theirs and he said to the official, ‘Do not be afraid; only have faith.’ And he allowed no one to go with him except Peter and James and John the brother of James. So they came to the official’s house and Jesus noticed all the commotion, with people weeping and wailing unrestrainedly. He went in and said to them, ‘Why all this

commotion and crying? The child is not dead, but asleep.’ But they laughed at him. So he turned them all out and, taking with him the child’s father and mother and his own companions, he went into the place where the child lay. And taking the child by the hand he said to her, ‘Talitha, kumi!’ which means, ‘little girl, I tell you to get up.’ The little girl got up at once and began to walk about, for she was twelve years old. At this they were overcome with astonishment, and he ordered them strictly not to let anyone know about it, and told them to give her something to eat.

A REFLECTION BY POPE FRANCIS

This Sunday’s Gospel passage presents two miracles performed by Jesus, almost describing them as a type of triumphal march toward life. Initially the Evangelist speaks about a certain Jairus, one of the rulers of the Synagogue, who approaches Jesus and beseeches Him to go to his home because his 12-year-old daughter is dying. Jesus agrees and goes with him; but, along the way, word arrives that the girl is dead. We can imagine that father’s reaction. But Jesus says to him: “Do not fear, only believe” (36). When they arrive at Jairus’ house, Jesus sends out the people who were weeping — there were also women mourners who were wailing loudly — and He enters the room with just the parents and the three disciples, and speaking to the dead girl He says: “Little girl, I say to you, arise”. And immediately the girl gets up, as if waking from a deep sleep.

Within the narrative of this miracle, Mark adds another: the healing of a woman who suffers from a haemorrhage and is healed as soon as she touches Jesus’ garment. Here what is striking is the fact that this woman’s faith attracts — to me the word “robs” comes to mind — the divine saving power that is in Christ, who, feeling that “power had gone forth from him”, tried to understand who it was. And when the woman, with much shame, comes forward and confesses the whole truth, He tells her: “Daughter, *your faith* has made you well”.

It is a matter of two interlocking narratives, with a single core: *faith*; and they show Jesus as the wellspring of life, as the One who restores life to those who trust fully in him. The two protagonists, that is, the little girl’s father and the sick woman, are not disciples of Jesus yet they are satisfied through their faith. They have faith in that man. From this we understand that all are permitted on the Lord’s path: no one should feel as an intruder, an interloper or one who has no right. To have access to His heart, to Jesus’ heart, there is only one requirement: to feel in need of healing and to entrust yourself to Him. I ask you: do each of you feel that you need to be healed? Of something, of some sin, of some problem? And, if you feel this, do you have faith in Jesus? These are the two requirements in order to be healed, in order to have access to his heart: to feel in need of healing and to entrust yourself to Him. Jesus goes to discover these people among the crowd and removes them from anonymity, frees them from the fear of living and of taking risks. He does so with a look and a word which sets them back on the path after much suffering and humiliation. We too are called to learn and to imitate these freeing words and this gaze which restores the will to live to those who lack it.

In this Gospel passage the themes of *faith* and of *new life*, which Jesus came to offer to all, are intertwined. When he enters the house where the dead girl lies, he sends outside those who are weeping and making tumult, and he says: “The child is not dead but sleeping”. Jesus is Lord, and before him physical death is like a dream: there is no reason to despair. Another death is the one to fear: that of the heart hardened by evil! Yes, we should be afraid of that one! When we feel we have a hardened heart, a heart that is hardened, allow me to say, a mummified heart, we should be afraid of this. This is the death of the heart. But sin too, the mummified heart too, is never the last word with Jesus, because he has brought us the infinite

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mercy of the Father. And even if we have hit rock bottom, his tender and strong voice reaches us: “I say to you, arise!”. It is beautiful to hear that word of Jesus addressed to each one of us: “I say to you, arise! Go. Stand up. Take courage, arise!”. Jesus restores life to the little girl and restores life to the healed woman: life and faith to both.

Let us ask the Virgin Mary to accompany our journey of faith and of concrete love, especially toward those who are in need. Let us invoke her maternal intercession for our brothers and sisters who are suffering in body and in spirit.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What does it look like in your life to reach out to Jesus in faith?
- Pope Francis tells us there are two things necessary to be healed by Jesus: acknowledge the need to be healed and the faith that we can be healed. What are some stumbling blocks for us in being healed today?
- Have you experienced healing in your life? What happened?

PRAYER

*Spend some time in prayer
with one another*

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. “Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray”)
3. Move to prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others’ prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps reciting the ‘Glory Be’ or similar prayer.