

1st July 2018 (13th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B)

Wisdom 1:13-15,2:23-24; Psalm 29(30):2,4-6,11-13; 2 Corinthians 8:7,9,13-15; Mark 5:21-43.

Your faith has restored you to health!

We are invited to reflect on two models of faith; the woman suffering from a haemorrhage, and Jairus the synagogue official. Full of faith, both approach Jesus trusting that he will listen to their prayers.

Our attention is immediately drawn to a number of parallels between the two stories. The woman had suffered for twelve years while the young girl died aged twelve. Both were associated with uncleanness; blood renders the woman unclean and dead bodies are considered unclean. Both experience a type of dying and both believe in Jesus' power and approach to plead their case.

The (unclean) woman with the haemorrhage risks the anger of the pressing crowd and pushes her way through to Jesus, believing that even if she simply touches his cloak, she would be healed. Jesus makes a distinction between the pressing of the crowd who are there as onlookers, and the faithful touch of the woman: 'who touched my clothes?' This sounds like a silly question, but Jesus is drawn by the faith of the suffering woman who comes forward and recounts her experience.

Meanwhile Jairus is informed that his daughter has died, so any intervention would be futile, but Jesus invites Jairus to remain faithful. In the sight of God no illness or sign of death is incurable; she is not dead but asleep! Only lack of faith brings about incurable and eternal death ('whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness' Mk 3:29). Finally both women are brought back to fullness of life and community; the woman is no longer unclean and can now live with her family, the young girl is returned to her parents!

As I reflect on these two healing stories, I cannot help but bring to mind the present situation of our Church community, the Body of Christ, the People of God! As a people we too feel like we are haemorrhaging; as a people we feel very sickened by the stories of the many terrible events that have taken place in our midst. Perhaps at times we too feel like this is taking too long and we cringe when we are asked to remember these events. What should we do?

Today's gospel gives me courage. The only sickness or death that is final is when we have no faith in God. As long as we have faith we can always push our way through the crowds and fall at Jesus' knees asking to be healed, personally and as a people. Like Jairus, as we carry with us our pain and anger, we need to be patient, even when we find it difficult to believe. I wonder what Jairus felt when instead of rushing to his home, Jesus tarried by asking 'who touched my clothes?' Really? Is that more important than a person's life! Yet Jesus encourages us: 'do not be afraid; only have faith!' Even in these moments we need to have faith. Perhaps the upcoming Plenary Council may be one opportunity of healing and growth!

Let us have faith that God listens to our prayers today.

Fr Mario