

Fr James' homily for the 13th Sunday in Ordinary Time 2021



First Reading: Wisdom 1:3 - 2:24
Second Reading: Second Letter of St Paul to the Corinthians 8:7-15
Gospel: Mark 5:21-43

Maturing in the faith...that is the theme I have mentioned these last two weeks for the Sundays and the weeks of Ordinary time, symbolised by the colour green in church, the colour in tradition associated with the Holy Spirit as much as the colour red is, and the colour symbolic of growth and maturation.

As we grow in faith we have to move away from the immediate and understandable temptation to view God as a sort of magic man, there to do our bidding, to a real relationship with the infinite and awesome God who in Jesus knows us intimately and who has a place for us in his eternal purpose.

So spend some time reflecting on today's Gospel. St Mark relates two events woven together - so he must intend us to hear them woven together. As has been said often by commentators, it is helpful to view the events through the eyes of Jairus.

Jairus is a man of substance. That he kneels at the feet of Jesus shows how desperate he is, and how Jesus has impressed him. As soon as he gets Jesus' attention his mission is derailed by the second event - the sick woman and Jesus' conversation with her. Clearly this is significant to St Mark, perhaps showing the need for absolute trust in Jesus. But think of poor Jairus. He must have been filled with frustration and anger. He must have wondered about why Jesus was not responding to the critical need of his daughter. And then he must have been filled with sadness and rage when they finally arrived and hear the news of the death of his daughter. These emotions are probably familiar to all of us in our struggle with faith.

What follows is one of the most powerful moments on the Gospels. Why? First, for the substance of what happens. God brings life from death. In this case in an obvious way. But secondly in the details. The Church simply copes with this scene by remembering the words of Jesus untranslated. We are in the presence of total, eternal holiness. But then we are told this is the most realistically observed of scenes, in the little details of what the girl does, for example.

Jairus stands for all of us and our confusion in the face of God's apparent action or perceived inaction; our limited view dealing with the infinite purposes of God. Just as in the events last week of the storm on the lake, can we own that the Lord Jesus knows what he is doing???

The challenge of the Gospel for us, as we face similar circumstances and struggles is: can we trust him? Can we turn our situation over to him? Can we get past saying why does he not do what we want right now? It is a mature faith that takes on board that my own story, my own life, is not my own, but part of God's plans. That my suffering is not just about me but is part of a greater scene.

The truth is that Jesus heals. He always heals. But maybe not in the way we want or expect. First he calls us to be healed from a slave relationship with God, and when we think of God as someone who needs to be implored and placated to do as we want, we are in a relationship that makes a slave out of either us or God. Jesus calls us to a new relationship of intimacy, shown so beautifully by the sick woman.

And one last comment: Our need to trust Jesus is nurtured by the ability to touch him, even, as the Gospel so graphically shows us, to touch the hem of his garments. We should ask for healing constantly - physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual healing. We should listen only to him, not the other voices. We should seek every occasion to touch him, in the Blessed Sacrament, visiting the tabernacle and preparing reverently for Holy Communion, and in the sacraments of healing: touching Jesus by seeking reconciliation and holy anointing at all the appropriate times. We must all fall down at his feet, but with the faith to accept that he knows what he is doing.

Amen.

Fr James and Fr Tom wish you a blessed Sunday. Keep safe and well, and never hesitate to pick up the telephone and be in touch.