Tuesday of the Fourth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (*Mk* 5:21-43): When Jesus had crossed again [in the boat] to the other side, a large crowd gathered around him, and he stayed close to the sea. One of the synagogue officials, named Jairus, came forward. Seeing him he fell at his feet and pleaded earnestly with him, saying, “My daughter is at the point of death. Please, come lay your hands on her that she may get well and live.”

He went off with him, and a large crowd followed him and pressed upon him. There was a woman afflicted with hemorrhages for twelve years. She had suffered greatly at the hands of many doctors and had spent all that she had. Yet she was not helped but only grew worse. She had heard about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak. She said, “If I but touch his clothes, I shall be cured.” Immediately her flow of blood dried up. She felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction. Jesus, aware at once that power had gone out from him, turned around in the crowd and asked, “Who has touched my clothes?” But his disciples said to him, “You see how the crowd is pressing upon you, and yet you ask, ‘Who touched me?’” And he looked around to see who had done it. The woman, realizing what had happened to her, approached in fear and trembling. She fell down before Jesus and told him the whole truth. He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has saved you. Go in peace and be cured of your affliction.”

While he was still speaking, people from the synagogue official’s house arrived and said, “Your daughter has died; why trouble the teacher any longer?” Disregarding the message that was reported, Jesus said to the synagogue official, “Do not be afraid; just have faith.” He did not allow anyone to accompany him inside except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James.

When they arrived at the house of the synagogue official, he caught sight of a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. So he went in and said to them, “Why this commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but asleep.” And they ridiculed him. Then he put them all out. He took along the child’s father and mother and those who were with him and entered the room

where the child was. He took the child by the hand and said to her, “Talitha koum,” which means, “Little girl, I say to you, arise!” The girl, a child of twelve, arose immediately and walked around. [At that] they were utterly astounded. He gave strict orders that no one should know this and said that she should be given something to eat.

“Daughter, your faith has saved you. Go in peace and be cured of your affliction.”

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Today the Gospel presents us with two miracles of Jesus that speak to us about the faith of two very different people. Both Jairus—one of the synagogue leaders—and the sick woman show great faith: Jairus is certain that Jesus can heal his daughter, while the woman trusts that even the slightest touch of Jesus' clothing will be enough to free her from a very grave illness. And Jesus, because they are people of faith, grants them the favor they had sought.

The first was the woman, the one who thought she was not worthy of Jesus' attention, the one who did not dare to bother the Master or those influential Jews. Without making a sound, she approaches and, by touching the hem of Jesus' cloak, "obtains" her healing, and she immediately feels it in her body. But Jesus, who knows what has happened, does not want to let her go without speaking to her: “Daughter, your faith has saved you. Go in peace and be cured of your affliction” (Mk 5:34).

Jesus asks Jairus for an even greater faith. As God had already done with Abraham in the Old Testament, He will ask for faith against all hope, faith in the impossible. Jairus was given the terrible news that his little daughter had just died. We can imagine the great pain that overwhelmed him at that moment, and perhaps the temptation to despair. And Jesus, who had heard it, says to him: “Do not be afraid; just have faith” (Mk 5:36). And like those ancient patriarchs, believing against all hope, he saw Jesus restore his beloved daughter to life.

Two great lessons of faith for us. From the pages of the Gospel, Jairus and the woman suffering from hemorrhages, along with so many others, speak to us of the need to have unwavering faith. We can make that beautiful Gospel exclamation our own: “I do believe, help my unbelief!” (Mk 9:24).

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “Today’s reading has conferred everything conductive to hope, and excluded anything connected with despair.” (Saint Peter Chrysologus)

- “We ask God to heal so many problems, our practical needs, and this is right, but what we must ask him for insistently is an ever firmer faith, so that the Lord may renew our life.” (Benedict XVI)

- “Jesus hears the prayer of faith, expressed in words (the leper, Jairus, the Canaanite woman, the good thief) or in silence (the bearers of the paralytic, the woman with a hemorrhage who touches his clothes, the tears and ointment of the sinful woman). Healing infirmities or forgiving sins, Jesus always responds to a prayer offered in faith (...)” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, Nº 2616)