

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 of Jesus' miracles that speak of the great faith of two entirely different persons. Whether Jairus —an official of the synagogue— or that poor ailing woman, both displayed much faith: Jairus is certain Jesus can cure his daughter, while that good old woman knows that just touching Jesus' robe will be more than enough to deliver her from her very serious bleeding. And, Jesus, because both are persons with a strong faith, grants them what they want.

The woman who thought she was unworthy of Jesus' attention, who did not dare to bother either the Master or those influential Jews, was the first one. Noiselessly, she came up behind Him and, softly touching Jesus' cloak, she “draws out” her cure, and she can feel how her body is completely healed. Jesus, who knows what has happened, does not want to let her go without saying to her: “Daughter, your faith has saved you. Go in peace and be cured of your affliction.” (Mk 5:34).

To Jairus, Jesus is asking an even stronger faith. As God did with Abraham in the Old Testament, Jesus will ask Jairus to have faith against hope, a faith in impossible things. Jairus had been told the terrible news his little daughter had just died. We can easily imagine the deep anguish and horrible pain he must have felt in that very moment, and perhaps the temptation to despair. But Jesus, who had also heard the news, tells him: «Do not fear, just believe» (Mk 5:36). And, like those ancient patriarchs, hopelessly believing, he could see how his beloved little girl was resurrected by Jesus.

Two great lessons in faith for us. Jairus and the woman suffering a serious bleeding, along with so many others, from the Gospel pages, speak to us of the need to have an unmovable faith. We can make ours that beautiful evangelic exclamation: «O Lord, I believe; help my unbelief» (Mk 9:24).

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

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

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“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)

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“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, N° 2616)