

Homily for the 13th Sunday in Ordinary Time

June 26-27, 2021

Readings: Wisdom 1:13-15; 2:23-24; 2 Corinthians 8: 7,9,13-15;

Mark 5:21-43

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In the first of our beautiful readings today, Wisdom tells us, “God created all things that they might have being, and the creatures of the world are wholesome...” God is present in all of creation. And we are invited to see God there. Wisdom goes on to say that God created humans to be imperishable. And justice to be immortal. In biblical terms, justice means that everyone has what is needed for a fully human life. To paraphrase the second century bishop, St Irenaeus, “The glory of God is humanity fully alive!” As a recent homilist said, God wants all humanity to be flourishing. Alive! Thriving!

St. Paul encourages the Corinthians, in our second reading, to exercise justice in the form of equitable sharing—to enable another community to be more fully alive. I think a less obvious challenge for us comes from the healing stories in today's gospel. Less obvious, and perhaps more difficult.

Jairus, pleading for healing for his young daughter, is a synagogue official. An insider. While most of the religious leaders oppose Jesus, he comes as a believer. Desperate to save the daughter he loves. The unnamed woman with a hemorrhage is an outsider. Ritually unclean, she would have been totally isolated from society for twelve years. After so many attempts to find healing, she, too, must have been desperate. Mingling in the crowd. Reaching out to a strange man. In violation of religion and society's norms.

Faith is a key component in both of these stories. “Do not fear, only believe,” Jesus tells Jairus. “Daughter, your faith has made you well,” he tells the woman.

Jesus' healing crosses boundaries, both ethnic and gender. In touching his garments the woman renders Jesus unclean. Yet he restores her to society, calling her “Daughter” and verifying her healing. Jesus' taking the dead child by the hand renders him ritually unclean, as well. Jesus chooses not to

leave people in the conditions he finds them. And he has the power to alter their situations. Clearly, he wants them to flourish. To be fully alive. To thrive.

What about us? Can we as the Christian community alter the conditions of people's lives? Will we, too, bring healing? Can we reach out beyond our comfort zone? Must not we also cross boundaries to follow in Jesus' footsteps? We are called to live as Jesus showed us how. That is difficult, and the temptation is to allow the gospel to become domesticated.

Whom do we consider to be outsiders? To be ritually unclean? The "undeserving poor"? The homeless? Members of the other political party? Or of Black Lives Matter? The unvaccinated? Criminals crowded in Covid infested jails? Native Americans, denied land and water rights—guaranteed in treaty after treaty—that were abrogated? Where are we tempted to limit our ministry? Our charity? To be blind to God's presence in all God's creation? In one another?

If the glory of God is humanity fully alive, how can we cooperate in God's desire for that to happen? We cannot be fully whole until God's justice is achieved. Until all people can thrive. We each have a part to play in making that a reality.

A tall order, you say? Absolutely! We will need the same kind of courage as Jesus. But remember, Jesus poured out his Spirit on us that we might have that courage.

In last Sunday's gospel, Jesus told his disciples to cross boundaries into Gentile territory. To unbelievers, for heaven's sake! He was inviting them to change how they looked at all of life. Might that invitation also apply to us?

Recently, I was at a meeting in which we were asking for a change in the organization's leadership. The original wording of our request was very strong. Many of us felt that to be warranted. Then one man, although he shared our feelings, invited us to soften the language so as not to hurt the person in the same way a predecessor had been hurt.

As we emerge from this pandemic, we have the opportunity to create a new and better “normal.” One in which justice is immortal. Where we see and celebrate God's presence in one another and in all of creation. Where the glory of God is in everyone having all that is needed to be fully alive. Despite our fears, faith and trust in Jesus can make this possible.