

Commentary on the Gospel: “I say to you, arise”

Gospel for the 13th Week in Ordinary Time (Year B), and commentary.

Gospel (*Mk* 5:21 - 43)

And when Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered about him, and he was beside the sea.

Then came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and seeing him, he fell at his feet, and implored him earnestly, saying, “My little daughter is at the point of

death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live.” And he went with him.

And a great crowd followed him and thronged about him. And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse. She had heard the reports about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment. For she said, “If I touch even his garments, I will be made well.” And immediately the flow of blood dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease.

And Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone forth from him, immediately turned about in the crowd and said, “Who touched my garments?”

And his disciples said to him, “You see the crowd pressing around you, and yet you say, ‘Who touched me?’” And he looked around to see who had done it. But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before him, and told him the whole truth.

And he said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.”

While he was still speaking, there came from the ruler’s house some who said, “Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?” But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue, “Do not fear, only believe.” And he allowed no one to follow him except Peter and James and John the brother of James.

They came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and Jesus saw a

commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. And when he had entered, he said to them, “Why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but sleeping.” And they laughed at him. But he put them all outside and took the child’s father and mother and those who were with him and went in where the child was. Taking her by the hand he said to her, “Talitha cumi,” which means, “Little girl, I say to you, arise.”

And immediately the girl got up and began walking (for she was twelve years of age), and they were immediately overcome with amazement. And he strictly charged them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

Commentary

Today's Gospel recounts for us two of Christ's miracles. As sometimes happens in his Gospel, Saint Mark intersperses one story with another. While Jesus is on his way to the house of Jairus to heal his daughter, a woman who has been ill for twelve years from a disease related to a ritual impurity (cf. *Lev* 15:25), touches his clothing with the desire to be cured. When Jesus asks who touched him, she "fell down before him" (v. 33). Thus she showed her faith in Christ's power and trust in his love. "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease" (v. 34). Our Lord's words make clear that the miracle required faith – that a miracle is not something mechanical. Moreover, the woman's physical healing is related to her spiritual healing, granted by God's grace to those who open themselves to Jesus

with faith. The Latin Vulgate translates Christ's words here (as some English translations of this verse also do): "Daughter, your faith has *saved* you" (*Mk* 5:34).

Jesus then continues on his way to the house of Jairus, one of the leaders of the synagogue. He too had prostrated himself before Jesus and begged him to help him (cf. vv. 22-23). But it seems that it is already too late: "While he was still speaking, there came from the ruler's house some who said, 'Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?'" (v. 35). But Jesus sets out, taking only Peter, James and John with him, who were the first disciples called to follow him. They are the ones who will also witness his Transfiguration.

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wailing loudly. And when he had entered, he said to them, ‘Why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but sleeping.’ And they laughed at him” (vv. 38-40). This episode invites us to understand that the word “life” has two meanings. True life is not that of the person who merely breathes, it is life in God. “But he put them all outside, and took the child’s father and mother and those who were with him and went in where the child was. Taking her by the hand he said to her, ‘Talitha cumi,’ which means, ‘Little girl, I say to you, arise.’ And immediately the girl got up and began walking (for she was twelve years of age), and they were immediately overcome with amazement” (vv. 40-42).

Jesus’ words in Aramaic are not a magic formula. Saint Mark records them to give authenticity to his account. Jesus is the Resurrection

and the Life. Jesus restores life to the young girl, just as he will do for his friend Lazarus: a resurrection to mortal life in this world. But the final resurrection, when our Lord returns on the last day, will be a resurrection to eternal life. Hence the words “I say to you, arise” (v. 42) can be seen as a promise of eternal life.

The *Alleluia* for today’s Mass invites us to strengthen our faith in eternal life: “Our Savior Jesus Christ destroyed death and brought life to light through the Gospel” (cf. *2 Tim* 1:10). Christ has revealed to us life and immortality, says Saint Paul, who later reminds Timothy that the Holy Spirit dwells in them.

God created us to be imperishable, we hear in the first reading from the book of Wisdom. We profess in the Creed that the Holy Spirit is the giver of life. He acts in the time of the Church through the sacraments and

in our souls. Baptism gives us the life of grace; it is God's great gift to mankind. It draws us up from the netherworld to life (cf. *Ps 30*), for a personal encounter with Jesus. We are invited to greatly value the new creation that is the life of grace, our filial adoption (cf. *Collect prayer*).

Our Lord's two miracles can be seen as an invitation to strengthen our hope in Heaven. "Do everything unselfishly, for pure Love, as if there were neither reward nor punishment. But in your heart foster the glorious hope of Heaven" (Saint Josemaria, *The Way*, no. 668).

We should also value highly the grace that comes to us through the sacraments in an habitual way, especially in Confession and the Eucharist. All the sacraments are the fruit of our Lord's Passion, Death and Resurrection: of his Paschal Mystery. So he tells the disciples not to make

the miracle known yet, since it is inseparable from his “hour” which has not yet come.

Christ is true God and true Man, a “very human” man, as we see when Jesus tells them to give the girl something to eat (cf. v. 43). In Christ Jesus, the human and the divine are forever intertwined in Love.

Guillaume Derville

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