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Thursday's Gospel: Jesus, Giver of Life

Gospel for Thursday in the 2nd Week of Ordinary Time, and commentary.

Gospel (*Mk 3:7-12*)

Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the sea, and a great multitude from Galilee followed; also from Judea and Jerusalem and Idumea and from beyond the Jordan and from about Tyre and Sidon a great multitude, hearing all that he did, came to him. And he told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, lest they should crush him; for he had healed many, so that all

who had diseases pressed upon him to touch him.

And whenever the unclean spirits beheld him, they fell down before him and cried out, “You are the Son of God.” And he strictly ordered them not to make him known.

Commentary

The Gospel for today's Mass gives us a rough map of Jesus' growing influence: his fame reaches from Galilee in the north to Judea in the south; and news of his preaching and healing has already spread further north to Tyre and Sidon, and further south to Idumea and even beyond the Jordan. The Gospel message has no borders or fences. And the hearts of those people, our own hearts, are thirsting for that Gospel, that

powerful word of hope, the bearer of overflowing life.

It is we who, witnesses to God's goodness manifested through Christ, are called to proclaim the Gospel message with our words and deeds. But in order to proclaim it with conviction, this message has to reach the depths of our own hearts and transform us. Hence the need for a personal encounter with Jesus. It is one thing to read or listen, and another to experience Christ's closeness us. The Gospel shows us large crowds eager to touch Jesus and tells us that he himself works miracles by touching those he is going to heal. The sense of touch is, from a certain point of view, what puts us in the most direct contact with the person in front of us. Hence the importance of a caress or hug that shows our willingness to share in the other person's situation, in their suffering and joy. How

important these signs of tenderness are!

Jesus never rejects the crowds. He does everything he can to enable as many people as possible to listen to him. But at the same time, and especially in the Gospel according to Mark, he orders the demons and unclean spirits he has expelled not to make him known. Why? Because until the Passion, Cross and Resurrection take place, the understanding of who he is and his message is incomplete and distorted. If we want to be Christ's emissaries, we need to know well the One we are seeking to make known: his identity and his mission, and how he carries it out, bearing on his own shoulders the weight of our failings and illnesses in order to heal us.

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