

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time – July 1, 2018

Our Lady of Perpetual Help

First Reading: WIS 1:13-15; 2:23-24

God did not make death, nor does he rejoice in the destruction of the living. For he fashioned all things that they might have being; and the creatures of the world are wholesome, and there is not a destructive drug among them nor any domain of the netherworld on earth, for justice is undying. For God formed man to be imperishable; the image of his own nature he made him. But by the envy of the devil, death entered the world, and they who belong to his company experience it.

Responsorial Psalm: PS 30:2, 4, 5-6, 11, 12, 13

R. (2a) I will praise you, Lord, for you have rescued me.

I will extol you, O LORD, for you drew me clear and did not let my enemies rejoice over me. O LORD, you brought me up from the netherworld; you preserved me from among those going down into the pit. I will praise you, Lord, for you have rescued me. Sing praise to the LORD, you his faithful ones, and give thanks to his holy name. For his anger lasts but a moment; a lifetime, his good will. At nightfall, weeping enters in, but with the dawn, rejoicing.

R. I will praise you, Lord, for you have rescued me.

Hear, O LORD, and have pity on me; O LORD, be my helper. You changed my mourning into dancing; O LORD, my God, forever will I give you thanks.

R. I will praise you, Lord, for you have rescued me.

Second Reading: 2 COR 8:7, 9, 13-15

Brothers and sisters:

As you excel in every respect, in faith, discourse, knowledge, all earnestness, and in the love we have for you, may you excel in this gracious act also.

For you know the gracious act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich. Not that others should have relief while you are burdened, but that as a matter of equality your abundance at the present time should supply their needs, so that their abundance may also supply your needs, that there may be equality. As it is written: Whoever had much did not have more, and whoever had little did not have less.

Gospel: MK 5:21-43 OR 5:21-24, 35B-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 Jesus, "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.

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INVITATION TO PRAY

Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God...

Proclaim the Scriptures out loud

As you listen to the scriptures be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

INVITATION TO REFLECT

Because we live in a damaged world sickness is very prevalent, as is the awareness of the need for healing. Besides looking to modern medicine when we are sick, we pray for God to bless the procedures, and we pray for miraculous healing as well. Consequently, the connection between faith and healing is being recognized more and more, it is sought by many, and abused by some. On the one hand incidents of miraculous healing are known and reported, while on the other hand personal claims of possessing healing attributes are used by some for selfish purposes. Frequently the burden of sickness is increased by well-meaning but accusatory advice that, "If you will only believe more completely you will be healed." Simultaneously, we also know of godly, faith filled believers, recipients of many people's prayers, who succumb to their illness and experience what seems like an untimely death.

This week's Gospel reading records Jesus' healing power graciously given to both a well-off leader, and to the humble unknown. In one instance fear and hopelessness was present and in the other fear and faith, yet both were recipients of Jesus' healing power. And so we rightly wonder what is the proper understanding of this relationship between faith and healing.

Perhaps the best way to approach this question is to begin with what we know: 1) Sickness and death are a normal part of the human condition, a condition accompanying our fallen nature. 2) Jesus' death and resurrection restores our fallen nature so that we can become partakers of his divine nature and escape the corruption that is in the world. 3) Reversing the natural progression of sickness and death requires miraculous power which resides only within the power of God, and through his grace he has allowed mankind to discover many medical cures. 4) In all of life we are to have faith, faith in God's love and concern for our physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual well being, and faith in his ability and desire to help us. 5) The quantity of our faith is not as important as its quality, for Jesus said if we even have the faith of a mustard seed, a very tiny thing, we can do wonders. So it isn't how much faith we have but in whom our faith resides. 6) Our faith needs to be exercised not only in trusting God's power to heal, but also in trusting God's will for us when healing is not granted. God does allow his children to incur sickness and even death to bring about his glory and to accomplish his purposes. It takes equally as great faith to say, as Jesus did, "Nevertheless, thy will be done," as it does to say, "Please heal me." The things God allows in our lives are designed to bring us closer to him, to help us discover the depths of his love for us, and to illicit the willing abandonment of ourselves to his love and mercy. And though we often fear sickness and death, the abandonment of ourselves to his love in the midst of our illness and in the face of death is what the Holy Spirit enables us to do, replace fear with faith.

"There is a sense in which no doctor ever heals. The doctors themselves would be the first to admit this. The magic is not in the medicine but in the patient's body ... What the treatment does is to stimulate Natural functions or to remove what hinders them. We speak for convenience of the doctor, or the dressing, healing a cut. But in another sense every cut heals itself: no cut can be healed in a corpse ... All who are cured are cured by Him, not merely in the sense that His providence provides them with medical assistance and wholesome environments, but also in the sense that their very tissues are repaired by the far-descending energy which, flowing from Him, energizes the whole system of Nature."

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INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING

First Reading

1. What do you conclude when bad things happen to good people?

Second Reading

2. How can we excel in faith?

Gospel Reading

3. With which of the people in this passage do you most identify? Why?
4. How would you describe Jesus' concern for these individuals?
5. How can we develop a spirit of faith during the good times in our lives, that will sustain us during the difficult times?

INVITATION TO ACT

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another's openness and sensitivity. Conclude with a final prayer.