



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

13th Sunday in Ordinary Time-Year B-June 27th 2021

Readings: Wisdom 1: 13-15; 2: 23-24, Psalm 29, 2 Corinthians 8: 7.9.13-15, Mark 5: 21-43

Today's Gospel is a powerful tale of healings. More than that, it is about the Lord's power over life and death. It is about loving and longing and irreducible faith and courage in the face of suffering and human mortality. We encounter the travelling circus that surrounds Jesus, the crowd, the excitement, the pushing and shoving for proximity, the need for everyone to get a piece of the action.

In the midst of this great caravan of the terminally nose and the desperately needy, a tragedy unfolds. The head of the local synagogue, Jairus, flings himself at the feet of Jesus. He is faced with the worst thing any parent can imagine, the imminent death of his beloved child, his daughter. Pride, place, importance, social standing, opposition to the ministry of Jesus, are all swept aside in the desperate needs of the father's heart. Jesus' response to Jairus' faith is immediate. He sets out for the house only to be met by the worst possible news – the little girl has died. But, as we know, something else happened in between. A woman suffering a haemorrhage for twelve years – this may be biblical speak for a never ending period thus making her ritually unclean and excluded from worship etc – touches Him, desperate to draw His healing power into her. And Jesus stops and notices. 'Who touched me?' (Don't be silly Lord,

we all touched you in this heaving mob). But Jesus knows. Someone touched Him with intention and with a heart so desperate and full of longing and such faith that He felt power go out of Him. The woman, fearful, exposed, falls at His feet and confesses. Instead of berating her for breach of ritual or taking of His power just when He needs it up at full whack for the dying child, Jesus confirms her healing and her faith.

(Many years ago I remember taking the youth group to Falmouth for a wonderful weekend with Youth 2000. At the Healing Service we took it in turns to kneel at the altar rail as the priest passed along bearing the veiled Ciborium containing the Presence from the Tabernacle. As he paused in front of each soul, we were encouraged to simply hold the edge of the veil, to touch, as it were, the fringe of the garment of Christ – like the woman with the haemorrhage - and pray for someone we knew who was sick. It was a memorable and powerful moment for all of us.)

The delay in Jesus progress to the gravely ill child has been brief but diminishing and, as it turns out, fatal for the child.

‘Don’t bother Jesus now, the child is dead.’

Time for a little pastoral sympathy and a change of plan? Not a bit of it. Jesus tells Jairus to have faith and carries on down the street to the house where mourning is in full ululating swing. Jesus clears out the wailers and announces the girl is ‘Not dead but sleeping’. This announcement is greeted with cries of incredulity and mocking laughter.

Jesus, accompanied by the three disciples of the Transfiguration, the inner core, enters the dead girl’s room. Jesus stoops to her bedside, takes her hand and speaks, ‘Little girl, arise.’

The Greek is interesting here. The Lord says ‘Be Raised’ –get up.

The Gospel then records that she was raised – but the word is changed from egeire (e gear ay) to aneste – the word for resurrection from the dead. The little girl is, like Lazarus, a sign of what is to come in Christ and what, for those in Christ, will be universal.

In both stories of the miraculous healings, interwoven in the hurly burly of mission and ministry, we see the long-term sufferer and the victim of sudden mortality bound together, the subjects deep faith, desperate longing and an urgent priority to get into the Presence of the One who alone can save. Perhaps we might encourage one another in that intensity and conviction that is so vital to our prayer ministry for the sick and the dying as they reach out to touch Him and we invite Him into our homes to bring salvation and life.