

DESPERATE SEEKERS AND BELIEVERS: 13TH SUNDAY B

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Along the road of life we become aware of many desperately-seeking persons. How do they deal with their desperation? Over and over again we have learned of asylum seekers e.g., so desperate to escape from poverty and persecution that they risk their lives by paying people-smugglers and climbing into overcrowded leaky boats heading for lands of freedom and opportunity. So they are seeking something good for themselves and their families. But another group are hell-bent on seeking hurt and harm to others. For instance, recently an Australian sporting hero got so fed-up with his marriage, that he went to the races, drank all day, came home drunk and angry to his wife and children, and there before their eyes set about wrecking their home and furniture, including his wife's most precious personal possessions.

In the gospel today we meet both a man and a woman in two situations of such acute personal pain that they desperately seek from the great person of Jesus, life, hope and healing. Jairus, the synagogue official and loving father of a *'desperately sick'* twelve-year old daughter, is convinced that if only Jesus would place his hands on her *'to make her better and save her life'* she will surely recover. The unnamed woman, suffering for twelve years from a gynaecological condition for which she has spent her life-savings on one doctor after another, has one last hope. She is convinced that *'if she can touch even his clothes'*, surely she will *'be well again'*.

The moment this suffering woman touches the clothes of Jesus, she senses that she is cured of her condition. But she is not allowed to slink away into the crowd. Turning right around Jesus asks, *'Who touched my clothes?'* Clearly he doesn't want to be treated like a magician or a mobile relic. His question and his look bring the woman forward. Frightened and shaking, she falls at his feet and tells him the whole truth. Jesus insists on meeting her face-to-face, not to humiliate her, but to praise her for her faith and send her on her way relieved and at peace.

While Jesus is still speaking, messengers come to tell Jairus that his beloved daughter has died. Jesus overhears this, and immediately says to this grieving father, *'Don't be afraid; only have faith.'* Taking with him only his inner circle of disciples, Jesus goes into the house where he finds mourners weeping and wailing at the top of their voices. When he tells them that the child is not dead but asleep, their mourning turns into mockery. They are no help at all. So he throws them out. Then, accompanied by the child's mother and father and his three close friends, Jesus goes into her room. Supported by this little community of faith, Jesus takes her by the hand, and prompts her to rise up. When she does so he adds the touching words, *'Give her something to eat.'*

It's worth dwelling on the details of Mark's two stories because they give us valuable insight into the character of Jesus. They tell us of someone who feels acutely the desperate pain of others, and who does not disappoint those who approach him for help. There are mothers and fathers e.g., who keep grieving for their dead children long after others have forgotten or have moved on. To Jesus these children are just as precious as the daughter of Jairus. As the Risen Lord he will come to awaken them. We firmly believe that. That's why Jesus keeps saying, *'Don't be afraid; only have faith.'*

Of course there are many who mock our belief and hope in life after death. They claim say that death destroys us, wipes us out, and does not lead anywhere. But there's no place for that attitude among us. After all, we are Christians. We believe strongly in Jesus as the *'Resurrection and the Life'*, and in his reassuring words, *'Don't be afraid; only have faith'*.

All of us are wounded persons - more or less. The woman who came to Jesus was deeply and even desperately wounded. But people can be wounded without showing it. They can carry such invisible wounds as feelings of rejection, failure, guilt, worthlessness, loneliness, bitterness and hostility.

All of us need healing, and all of us can be '*wounded healers*' too. Our lives are continually touching those of others. With a little sympathy we can heal a wounded heart. With a little care we can ease a troubled mind. With a little time we can ease another's loneliness. So every now and then let's stop and ask ourselves, '*What goes out from me through my words, my deeds, and my relationships? Am I hurting others? Or, under God, am I actually healing them?*'

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