

The Holy Spirit Province NEWSLETTER

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DESPERATE SEEKERS AND BELIEVERS: 13TH SUNDAY B

Along the road of life, we become aware of many desperate 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 of desperadoes is hell-bent on inflicting hurt and harm on others. For instance, not so long ago an Australian sporting hero got so fed up with his marriage, that he went to the races, boozed 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 would 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,' she will surely 'be well again.'

The very moment this suffering and faith-filled woman touches the clothes of Jesus, she senses that she is cured of her condition. But Jesus does not let her just slink away anonymously into the crowd. He wants to meet the whole person, not just her ailment. Neither does he want to be treated like a magician or a mobile relic. Turning right around he asks, 'Who touched my clothes?' His question and his look bring the woman forward. Trembling with fear, she falls at his feet and tells him the whole truth. Jesus has insisted on meeting her face-to-face, not to humiliate her, but to praise her for her faith, and to send her on her way, feeling mightily 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 his inner circle of disciples - Peter, James and John - Jesus goes into the house where he encounters 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 to 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 the child's room. Supported by this little community of faith, Jesus takes her by the hand and prompts her to get up. When she does so, he adds the kind and 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, many mock our belief and hope in life after death. They claim that death destroys us, wipes us out, and leads nowhere. 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.'

The woman who came to Jesus was deeply and even desperately wounded. All of us too are wounded – some more, some less. But people can be wounded without showing it. They can carry such invisible wounds as their thoughts and 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 lessen another's loneliness.

So at least now and then, let us stop and ask ourselves, 'What is going out from me in my words, my actions, and my relationships? How am I coming through? Am I hurting and humiliating others? Or, under God, as a 'wounded healer' myself, and as an agent of the healing Jesus, am I healing them, putting them back together again?' In short, am I for them, a friend or a foe?

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