

Sunday, July 1, 2018

13th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading Wisdom 1:13-15, 2:23-24

2nd Reading: 2 Corinthians 8:7, 9, 13-15

Responsorial: Psalm 30:2, 4-6, 11-13

Gospel: Mark 5:21-43

If I but touch his clothes . . . (Mark 5:28)

If you could use only one word to describe today's story of the woman's healing, what would it be? Faith? Touch? Power? These are all very good ways to encapsulate what happened to this woman, but let's look at this story from another angle. Let's say that the one-word description should be "striving."

This woman had her mind made up. She was going to push her way through the crowd because she believed that Jesus could heal her. So she strove to get to Jesus, and she was healed!

Other people in Scripture acted like this woman. One was a Canaanite woman who had three chances to give up. But she kept pushing on, and her daughter was healed (Matthew 15:21-28). There's also blind Bartimaeus and ten men afflicted with leprosy (Mark 10:46-52; Luke 17:12-19). All of these people strove to push through obstacles, and they were blessed because of it.

Now let's look at Jesus' responses to these people. To the Canaanite woman he said, "Woman, great is your faith" (Matthew 15:28). To Bartimaeus he said, "Your faith has saved you" (Mark 10:52). To the one leper who returned to thank him, he said, "Stand up and go; your faith has saved you" (Luke 17:19). And to the woman in today's Gospel he said, "Daughter, your faith has saved you" (Mark 5:34).

In every instance, Jesus told the people that their trust in him played a vital role in their healing. We know, of course, that it was Jesus who did the healing, but we also see that his power flowed because of the way the people pressed forward despite obstacles. If they didn't continue to strive in faith, it's likely that they would not have been healed!

Let's imitate these heroes and heroines today. Let's put our confidence in the Lord. Let's strive in prayer, both for ourselves and for our loved ones. Let's reach out and touch his cloak.

"Jesus, I will trust in you no matter what."

(Many thanks to *The Word Among Us* (www.wau.org) for allowing us to use meditations from their monthly devotional magazine. Used with permission.)

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Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion:

1. The first reading begins with these astounding words, *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.* It ends with these words: *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.*
 - How would you answer someone who asked you the meaning of the opening words of this reading?
 - What is your understanding of the ending words of this reading?
 - What kind of “death” do these words describe: just a physical death or a different kind of death?
2. In the Responsorial Psalm, the psalmist speaks of the goodness and faithfulness of the Lord with these words: *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.* It ends with these uplifting words: *You changed my mourning into dancing; O LORD, my God, forever will I give you thanks.*
 - What are some examples from your own life when the Lord, “did not let my enemies rejoice over me,” “brought me up from the netherworld,” “preserved me,” “rescued me,” and “changed my mourning into dancing”?
 - What do these ending words of the responsorial psalm mean: “O LORD, my God, forever will I give you thanks”? In what ways do they apply to you?
3. In the second reading, St. Paul speaks of *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.*
 - In what ways did Jesus become “poor” for you? In what ways by his poverty, did you become “rich”?
4. The second reading also speaks of sharing our “abundance” with others so that *your abundance at the present time should supply their needs, so that their abundance may also supply your needs, that there may be equality.*
 - What are the two types of abundance spoken of in these words from the second reading?
 - What part does the social justice teachings of the church play in your life, especially in your use of your time, talents, and treasure in serving the poor and needy? How can you make them a greater reality in your life?
5. In the Gospel reading, we see a great demonstration of Jesus’ power and authority to heal the sick and raise the dead. The synagogue leader, Jairus, speaks these words to Jesus: *My daughter is at the point of death. Please, come lay your hands on her that she may get well and live.* The woman afflicted with hemorrhages speaks these words to herself: *If I but touch his clothes, I shall be cured.* In his book, “The Practice of Healing Prayer: A How-to Guide for Catholics,” Francis MacNutt says that praying with expectant faith means trusting in God’s love, goodness and mercy when we pray.
 - What role, if any, do you think the expectant faiths of Jairus and the women played in the healings that occurred?
 - What are the situations in your life that sometimes make it difficult for you to pray to Jesus with expectant faith?
 - What are some fruits in your life of praying with expectant faith?
6. The meditation is a reflection on the healing of *a women afflicted with hemorrhages for twelve years*, as described in the Gospel reading. The meditation describes this healing and other healings of Jesus in this way: “This woman had her mind made up. She was going to push her way through the crowd because she believed that Jesus could heal her. So she strove to get to Jesus, and she was healed! Other people in Scripture acted like this woman. One was a Canaanite woman who had three chances to give up. But she kept pushing on, and her daughter was healed (Matthew 15:21-28). There’s also blind Bartimaeus and ten men afflicted with leprosy (Mark 10:46-52; Luke 17:12-19). All of these people strove to push through obstacles, and they were blessed because of it.” The meditation ends with these words: “So come and ask Jesus for his help, and then trust him to act on his own schedule. Maybe go one step further, and pray for all the other people he’s helping. Jesus is big enough to care for us all!”
 - The meditation describes what the healings have in common: “All of these people strove to push through obstacles, and they were blessed because of it.” What obstacles can keep you from coming to Jesus for healing?
 - What are some steps you can take to respond to the words at the end of the meditation?
7. Take some time now to pray and ask the Lord for the grace to have faith and trust in him no matter what situations you face in your life. Use the prayer below from the end of the meditation as the starting point.

“Jesus, I will trust in you no matter what.”

[The discussion questions were created by Maurice Blumberg, who is currently a member of the board of directors of the ChristLife Catholic Ministry for Evangelization (www.christlife.org) and a member of the National Service Committee Council of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (www.nsc-chariscenter.org). Maurice was also the founding executive director of the National fellowship of Catholic Men, a chairman of the board of *The Word Among Us* (www.wau.org), and director of partner relations for The Word Among Us Partners ministry. He can be contacted at mblumberg@wau.org or mblumberg@aol.com.]