

Dearly beloved: Christ is in our midst!

There's an old joke about the cliff climber who falls and is clinging to a branch growing out of the rock and in desperation prays, "God, save me!" And the climber hears a voice say, "If you believe, let go." The climber responds, "Is there anybody else up there?" When we are in dire straits we pray often that God will take away the suffering and we discover He doesn't remove it but rather suffers together with us, giving us the strength to pass through the trial we face, whatever it is whether physical, mental, emotional or spiritual.

Today's gospel shows us two people who are desperate and seek out Jesus. Jairus comes to find a miracle for his daughter. She is dying. He is desperate. Here he is, the leader of the synagogue coming to Jesus when some among the religious leaders put out of the synagogue anyone who had anything to do with Jesus. Jairus took a risk, a leap of faith. He didn't care what would happen to him. Jairus' only concern was for the salvation of his daughter from her illness.

The woman seeks healing. She, too, is desperate to find a cure. Spent all her livelihood looking for a cure. She has nothing left. In her desperation she turns to Jesus. Though on a life or death mission, Jesus stops. As God He knew who it was that touched Him. Jesus looks to get a response from the woman. He does not want her to remain anonymous. Jesus does not want to have her cured and walk away without knowing Him. For her part, she is fearful and trembling. Someone with an issue of blood touching another person made the other person unclean according to the law of Moses. That is not Jesus' concern. The woman confesses her illness, why she touched Jesus, and how she had been healed by doing so. Jesus does not reprimand her for making Him unclean. Rather He speaks with His suffering creature whom He had healed. "Daughter, be of good cheer; your faith has made you well. Go in peace." The woman leaves with her mind at peace, her body healed and her spirit restored. In her desperation, she received more than what she asked.

Then Jesus turns Himself to finish His mission to Jairus' daughter. The delay with the woman allows Him to perform an even greater miracle than curing a dying girl. Now He comes as the Author of Life. When He arrives, though, He is laughed at by the girls' parents and even His closest disciples Peter, James and John when He tells them the girl is but asleep. They all thought He meant she was asleep in the sense of slumber. They knew she was dead. Jesus is pointing to the transformation of death through Him. That it is but temporary. The body and soul are separated in death but they shall be reunited when He returns to the earth in glory. So He raises the girl back to earthly life. This miracle serves as a sign of what will happen to Jesus Himself when He dies upon the cross and is buried. On the third day He will rise again, not to earthly life that is yet subject to suffering and death, but to the glory of life in the Resurrection which is eternal and glorious, where there is no pain, sorrow nor sighing.

Jesus meets us in our need as He does with Jairus' daughter and the woman. He walks with us in our sorrows and our joys. He is not indifferent to our pain. He Himself felt the suffering of the woman, the pain of Jairus. And He Himself endured the agony of going to His passion, enduring betrayal, being forsaken, being given up to unjust condemnation, whipped, nailed to a cross and dying abandoned by almost all His disciples. As a human who is both God and man, He suffered for us. He knows our struggles whether they be physical, mental, emotional or spiritual. He knows them not only in the sense as God Who knows everything. He knows them from within because He experienced them Himself. He is our companion and co-sufferer in all of our tribulations. Our prayer to Him does not mean our sufferings will disappear. Rather our prayer calls upon Him as our companion and co-sufferer to be with us, walk with us, support us in our trials. And by our walking with Him and Him walking with us, we will find the glory of His resurrection also. He only asks of us to be faithful to Him in good times and in bad, believe in Him, live through Him, with Him and in Him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit so that we may always give glory and honor to His and our heavenly Father and join in the fullness of life of the Father and Son and Spirit here and in the kingdom to be fully come.