

## Thirteenth Sunday Ordinary Time– Year B

July 1, 2018

**Christ the Good Shepherd, ORCC**

**Reflection by Father Charles Blanchard**

First Reading: Wisdom 1: 13-15; 23-24

Psalm: 30: 2, 4, 5-6, 11, 12, 13

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

Gospel: Mark 5: 21-43 or 5: 21-24; 35B-43

WELCOME to this AMAZING Church where we hear God's Word and feast at this Table for spiritual comfort where **YOU're LOVED** without measure!

**My sisters and brothers; enduring members of this Church and new-found-Friends of Christ the Good Shepherd, WELCOME!**

Some years ago, my oldest brother, Tom, died of brain cancer. Tom was in his sixties and was a retired Navy Captain who had been a pilot. He was always physically fit and mentally sharp, so we became concerned when he began to show signs of physical and mental impairment. After a lengthy battery of medical tests, the doctors diagnosed him with a virulent form of brain cancer. He had surgery followed by radiation and some chemotherapy. He was in the clear for a few months, but the cancer soon returned and he died about a year after the initial diagnosis.

During the time after Tom's surgery, when he was in the "clear," one of my sisters asked me a question about prayer. She mentioned that she had been praying hard for a number of people but that it did not seem that her prayers were being answered. And so she was not sure how she should pray for our brother. She was thinking that maybe she should not pray for healing for Tom, especially since the diagnosis was so serious. Perhaps, she thought, she should just pray for the ability to accept the outcome. So she asked me, "How should I be praying at this time?"

In this Sunday's very rich Gospel narrative, we meet two people who are in search of healing — Jairus, the synagogue official whose twelve-year-old daughter is gravely ill, and an unnamed woman who has been suffering from

hemorrhages for twelve years. Both are in dire situations, and each very directly approaches Jesus for help. Jairus, a leader of the synagogue and thus a prominent person, falls at the feet of Jesus and pleads with him earnestly. He is a desperate parent who will do anything to save his daughter.

The woman with the hemorrhage is quite a person. Theologians and spiritual writers from the time of the early church onward have held her up as a model of faith. Her condition would have prevented her from bearing children; it would also have rendered her ritually unclean and thus have led to her isolation from the community. Some Scripture scholars suggest that she may have been divorced by her husband because of her inability to bear children. And Mark tells us that she had spent everything she had in trying to find a cure.

But this woman has spunk. She is a person of daring and creative initiative who pushes her way through the crowd to touch Jesus: “If I but touch his clothes, I shall be cured,” she says. In so doing, she violates social and religious conventions. This is the only miracle story in the Gospel of Mark in which Jesus does not initiate the healing. After experiencing the healing power of God flow through her body she approaches Jesus with reverence. Mark informs us that she told Jesus “the whole truth.” Perhaps she told him not only the truth about what had happened when she touched his cloak, but also the truth about her life — her years of suffering and exclusion and her desperate search for wholeness.

When Jesus reaches the house of Jairus, he touches the lifeless body of Jairus’ daughter, thereby incurring ritual impurity himself. But in so doing he is once again the bearer of the life-giving power of God. In both encounters, Jesus responds with compassion to the needs of suffering people, and he makes their concerns the norm for his action. He embodies what the author of the Book of Wisdom teaches in the first reading for this Sunday: God is the source of life for everything that exists.

I thought for a long time about the question that my sister put to me — the question about how we should pray for Tom. I was grappling with the same quandary in my own prayer. I concluded that we needed to pray for healing for Tom, all the while entrusting him into the hands of God. Not to pray for healing for your brother would seem inhuman. And a truly Christian prayer is a prayer that is authentically human. This is not easy, of course, because often our prayers for healing do not result in a cure for those we love. We can, however, be sure that our prayer for the healing presence of Christ is always answered. And it is Christ’s healing presence that is the true source of life – life here and life in

eternity. It was the healing presence of Christ that would bring peace to Tom and to our family.

The Gospels reveal to us that the God who is encountered in Jesus is always on the move to offer new life, even in situations that seem “deathly.” As Christians, we trust that this is what God is doing all the time, even when we cannot understand why things happen the way they do. God is right there, present and on the move from within to bring life out of death.