

13th Sunday - Ordinary Time

June 30th & July 1st 2012

All Saints Parish

Rev. Fred Daley

Healing Through Social Justice

Jairus' daughter & the hemorrhaging woman

We've all heard the Gospel reading shared today before: of the raising of Jairus' daughter from the dead. I've always found it rather odd that the story of the hemorrhaging woman is stuck into the middle, sort of interrupting the story. In fact, as I was preparing my Homily, I was toying with just preaching on one of the stories... until I read a number commentaries by a group of scholars and pastoral agents that included Fr. Joe Nangle, the Franciscan Priest from Washington, DC who conducted our Parish Retreat in 2010. These commentaries point out that this passage is an example of Mark's "sandwich-construction" that wraps a story within a story in order to compel the reader or listener to relate the two.

The tale of these two women: Jairus' daughter and the hemorrhaging woman, dramatically points out a core teaching of Jesus - that was important for Mark's community to understand and just as important for our Community to understand as we gather here today.

Both Jairus and the woman approach Jesus for help, but their approach is in stark contrast: Jairus - a man and a Synagogue Official - approaches Jesus with dignity and properness, and addresses Jesus directly as a male equal: speaking face-to-face from his social status as head of his family, on behalf of his daughter. The hemorrhaging woman, on the other hand, who has no name in the story because she's a woman, approaches Jesus from behind - alone and afraid - and dares to merely touch his cloak - knowing how highly inappropriate it was for a hemorrhaging woman to be in public and - all the more - to interact with a man, a holy man at that..

Mark, in today's Gospel, is portraying two characters who are at the opposite ends of the social spectrum: the man at the top and the woman at the bottom of the social ladder. But at the moment of contact between Jesus and the woman - the dynamics of the story begin to change: The hemorrhaging woman's body is healed - just the opposite of what the Jewish audience would expect! They would have concluded that Jesus would become 'impure' because of his contact with the woman!

This poor, untouchable, nameless leper of a woman who had suffered at the hands of doctors, who - *for 12 years* - drained her finances and failed to help her condition, emerges from the margins of the story to center stage. It is now her turn to fall in front of Jesus - suggesting that she is now equal to Jairus. Finding her voice: "...she told the whole truth" (including no doubt, her opinion of the purity system and the medical establishment)!

Jesus, to the great shock and amazement of the crowd, acknowledges her status as "a daughter" - like Jairus's daughter - in the family of Israel; as a human person with great faith and dignity; as a child of God - created in God's own image and likeness!

My sisters and brothers, the point of the story for Mark's Community and for us gathered here today is:

*Only when the outcast woman is restored to true daughterhood,
can the daughter of the Synagogue leader be restored to true life!*

Let me repeat that:

*Only when the outcast woman is restored to true daughterhood,
can the daughter of the Synagogue leader be restored to true life!*

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This Gospel story points out dramatically a core teaching of Jesus: the poor, the weak, the marginalized and powerless are given priority in his ministry and are to be given priority in the Catholic Church, in the Diocese of Syracuse, in our All Saints Parish - in the year 2012 - if we are going to be faithful to the Mission and teaching of Jesus Christ.

Jesus, in our Gospel, is a healer of *both* the hemorrhaging, bleeding woman *and* Jairus' daughter; *but* by healing *first* the poor, marginalized woman, he beckons the entire people of his time and the entire people of our time to heal the deadly disease of social inequality!

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Palestine in the 1st Century was not exceptional in having a Purity Code that maintained stringent social boundaries and strata. Our Country - our culture - today is no less characterized by “purity codes,” although our society fails to acknowledge them as such. They are the structures and belief systems that create insiders and outsiders, grant some people access to health care, education, housing and food while others go without; and allow some to suffer while others prosper.

I can think of no more appropriate example for us to reflect on this weekend than the health care system in our nation: a health care system that excludes 30 million people from accessing it is a broken system - an immoral and unjust system in the richest nation in our world...; but: how difficult it is to change a social system, even one that is obviously broken!

People of Good Will, including our Catholic leadership, have been working to reform the Health Care System since 1918 and - no matter what our political persuasion - we must admit, that with all its imperfections, the Affordable Health Care Law, proposed by President Obama, approved by Congress and deemed Constitutional by the Supreme Court on Thursday, is a huge step forward in healing the deadly disease of social inequality that Jesus and the founders of all the major world religions condemn so vigorously.

With the implementation of the Affordable Health Care Law - both the “Jairus’ daughters” and the “hemorrhaging women” of the United States will have access to the most sophisticated medical system in the world! The dream of Jesus - and the goal of the disciples of Jesus - is that all people in all nations will ultimately have affordable health care and all the necessities of life: food, shelter, education, housing, as rights not privileges, by the very fact that all are human and created in God’s image and likeness; children of God and therefore, brothers and sisters.

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My sisters and brothers, this weekend we dedicate a Peace Pole in our Parish garden, that proclaims in eight different languages: "May peace prevail on earth." This Pole is a reminder that we at All Saints Parish are committed to joining with all people of good will in working for peace: peace in our hearts and ultimately peace in our world. But as our Gospel reflection reminds us - and as Pope Paul VI stated so clearly when addressing the United Nations in New York in 1964: "if you truly want peace, then you must work for justice;" work together to eliminate the inequalities, unfairness and injustices that create insiders and outsiders, the seeds of social violence and war.

We are privileged this weekend to dedicate our Peace Pole in gratitude to Bishop Tom Costello - a priest for 58 years, a bishop for 38 years and the spiritual leader of our Diocese - who throughout his ministry has, like Jesus, by word and example, made sure that the poor, the marginalized, the vulnerable and powerless were the top priority of his ministry. To this day, he knows the downtown homeless and street-people by name... and they know him by name as well! Since he became Bishop, he has chosen to live at St. Anthony's Parish on the south side, in a neighborhood in which many of the most excluded and powerless of our City dwell. His commitment to the Social Gospel has not been without a price. As contemporary American Church historian Richard McBrien and others have pointed out: Bishop Costello (along with Bishop Gumbleton of Detroit and others) remains an auxiliary Bishop precisely because of his courage to take a stand for justice in society and in the Church.

As we move toward our 4th of July celebrations this week, we give thanks to the founders of our Nation who were committed to creating a society in which liberty and justice for all was the defining characteristic and we pray for an end to the sins of greed and selfishness, extreme individualism, and addiction to consumerism that blind us to the truth... the truth that truly will set us free.

Amen!