

13th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B

GOSPEL

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When Jesus had crossed in the boat to the other side, a large crowd gathered round him and he stayed by the lakeside. Then one of the synagogue officials came up, Jairus by name, and seeing him, fell at his feet and pleaded with him earnestly, saying, 'My little daughter is desperately sick. Do come and lay your hands on her to make her better and save her life.' Jesus went with him and a large crowd followed him; they were pressing all round him.

While he was still speaking some people arrived from the house of the synagogue official to say, 'Your daughter is dead: why put the Master to any further trouble?' But Jesus had overheard this remark of theirs and he said to the official, 'Do not be afraid; only have faith.' And he allowed no one to go with him except Peter and James and John the brother of James. So they came to the official's house and Jesus noticed all the commotion, with people weeping and wailing unrestrainedly. He went in and said to them, 'Why all this commotion and crying? The child is not dead, but asleep.' But they laughed at him. So he turned them all out and, taking with him the child's father and mother and his own companions, he went into the place where the child lay. And taking the child by the hand he said to her, 'Talitha, kum!' which means, 'Little girl, I tell you to get up.' The little girl got up at once and began to walk about, for she was twelve years old. At this they were overcome with astonishment, and he ordered them strictly not to let anyone know about it, and told them to give her something to eat.

(Mark 5:21-24, 35-43)

DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- Jairus, as an official of the synagogue, belonged to one of the groups who were traditionally deeply suspicious and disapproving of Jesus. Here, however, Jairus' faith is contrasted with the lack of faith of the onlookers, who simply laugh at Jesus. His faith is rewarded.
- For Jesus to lay hands upon a young woman of twelve years of age (old enough to be betrothed) would have been seen as a scandalous act. Jesus breaks through the restrictions of social norms to bring life.
- The longer version of this gospel tells the story of the cure of the woman who had suffered from a haemorrhage for twelve years.
- Someone who had physical contact with women who were menstruating or with corpses became 'unclean' and therefore unable to participate in the religious life of Israel. Here Jesus contravenes the Jewish law to bring wholeness and life.

EXPLORING THE WORD

Jesus treats with respect and concern two 'untouchables': the haemorrhaging woman and the young girl's corpse. This double story shows us not only his compassion for those who are sick and his power over death but also his willingness to go beyond social and religious prohibitions in the service of others. The sick and desperate woman overcomes her social inhibitions in order to touch Jesus, hoping that mere contact with his garments will ensure her healing. Her faith urges her to act. In the case of Jairus' daughter, the child herself cannot ask. Instead, it is her father who pleads for her, even though, as a synagogue official, he was probably deeply suspicious of Jesus. In both cases, it is faith that is the key to healing.

- Have you ever been unable to help yourself, finding yourself totally dependent on another person for your needs?
- Do you feel any special bond with any of the characters in this gospel? In what ways do you identify with them?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- 'Do not be afraid; only have faith.' Reflect on this statement.
- In the full text of this gospel, two people reach out to Jesus, seeking to have their needs met. What are your needs at the moment? How can Jesus help in having those needs met?
- Share reflections on a time when you felt ostracised by others. How did you feel?
- Who are the people in our communities, in our streets, who are the 'untouchables'? What are some of the ways in which welcome and healing can be extended to them?
- Be aware of your human connections with others this week. Look around for opportunities to extend a life-giving touch to others.
- Use this week's gospel acclamation for your prayer:
Our Saviour Jesus Christ has done away with death and brought us life through his gospel.

