

### **THIRTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME–2024**

The grave side service of a woman who had a very strong personality and who was very outspoken had just finished. All of a sudden, as the casket was being lowered, there was a tremendous bolt of lightening and almost immediately after that, a massive clap of thunder, accompanied by even more thunder rumbling in the distance. The quiet, little old man who was now a widower, looked at the pastor and then looked up to the sky and calmly said, "Well, I guess she's arrived."

In the Gospel today we are presented with two people who had to be at their wits end with apparently no way out of it. What was going on in their lives touched the heart of their existence and for both, it really was a life and death situation. And because of that, both went out on a limb. Both went beyond the social and religious protocols of the day to get to him. They didn't care about political correctness or how other people would look at them.

As we hear, Jairus was a synagogue official and was probably one of the most important members of the Jewish community. His colleagues would already be looking for ways to silence Jesus. Jesus had already begun to attract large crowds as he shared with the people the Good News. So, for Jairus to approach Jesus and kneel at his feet, he basically was willing to give up his dignity and everything for his daughter, so much did he love her. He would have probably become an outcast in the eyes of his fellow Jews. Yet somehow he knew that God's love and care was not limited to certain place or a certain group of people. Even in the face of the mourners Jairus forgot everything, except how much he wanted the help of Jesus. The Gospel tells us how his faith and trust was rewarded.

On the way Jesus is confronted with another life and death situation. The woman who approached Jesus, was suffering from her bleeding and would have been considered unclean and basically, would have been viewed as the same as a leper. No one could touch her without themselves becoming unclean. For that reason, she would have had to live on the fringes of society, unable to participate in the life of her family or religious community. She too, like Jairus forgot her surroundings and just focused on her need and on Jesus. As she reached out and touched Jesus, she would have been aware that by doing so, according to the thinking of the time, like she would have actually made Jesus unclean. But just the opposite happens. She is made well and her life is given back to her. And, as she was made well physically, her confession and profession faith in Jesus allowed the healing to touch her whole being.

Both miracles today show the kindness and compassion of Jesus and his willingness to go the extra mile to help someone even if they didn't see eye to eye with Jesus or even if they were considered outcasts by others. Jesus looked beyond what most people thought proper and acceptable and he zeroed in on what people needed. These miracles show the wondrous possibilities that are ours if we are willing to really trust in Jesus and really reach out to him. The Gospel today speaks of people who had exhausted all their means and who had no one else to turn to except God. Their going against the grain and not caring what others thought, was both a sign of their desperation and their trust in the words that Jesus had been preaching. Both faced situations that were regarded as hopeless, with no remedy; both continued in their trust. Both give witness to the fact that it doesn't matter who one is when it comes to God caring for his people: rich or poor, male or female, young or old, Jew or Gentile, people from the time of Jesus or people today.

While the Gospel speaks about two people in life and death situations, we can learn from them in the less traumatic situations that we find ourselves in. When we think about bettering ourselves or moving ourselves forward, or when we think of the things that we would like to do or when we find ourselves in a place where what used to bring us happiness and fulfillment, no longer does, we need to believe in the possibilities and new opportunities that are out there. Like the Jairus and the woman of the Gospel, we need to believe in ourselves and our own worth; we need to believe that the Lord is with us; and, sometimes we have to go against the grain what others think is proper and right. We need to take a chance and, as they say, go for it. And, at a certain point, we just have to begin. We can't wait until things are just right or perfect; if we do, we will never start because things will never be just right. One of the most important and necessary words in the English language is start. That's the only way something new can happen—you gotta start somewhere and at some time take a risk.

And so, as we look at our lives, are there any things going on that are pushing us to our limits? Things that are causing us to lose hope? What are those things we would like to change? What is one thing that I would like to do to better myself? What have I always wanted to try to do or learn but didn't because I was afraid I was going to fail? Most currently, what's going to happen with the further implementation of the next step of the Road to Renewal? Again, let us turn to today's Gospel and look to the spirit and example of two ordinary people who achieved something extraordinary because they were willing to put their trust in Jesus and in themselves.