

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading I

[Wis 1:13-15; 2:23-24](#)

God did not make death,
nor does he rejoice in the destruction of the living.
For he fashioned all things that they might have being;
and the creatures of the world are wholesome,
and there is not a destructive drug among them
nor any domain of the netherworld on earth,
for justice is undying.
For God formed man to be imperishable;
the image of his own nature he made him.
But by the envy of the devil, death entered the world,
and they who belong to his company experience it.

Responsorial Psalm

[Ps 30:2, 4, 5-6, 11, 12, 13](#)

R. (2a) **I will praise you, Lord, for you have rescued me.**
I will extol you, O LORD, for you drew me clear
and did not let my enemies rejoice over me.
O LORD, you brought me up from the netherworld;
you preserved me from among those going down into the pit.
R. **I will praise you, Lord, for you have rescued me.**
Sing praise to the LORD, you his faithful ones,
and give thanks to his holy name.
For his anger lasts but a moment;
a lifetime, his good will.
At nightfall, weeping enters in,
but with the dawn, rejoicing.
R. **I will praise you, Lord, for you have rescued me.**
Hear, O LORD, and have pity on me;
O LORD, be my helper.
You changed my mourning into dancing;
O LORD, my God, forever will I give you thanks.
R. **I will praise you, Lord, for you have rescued me.**

Reading II

[2 Cor 8:7, 9, 13-15](#)

Brothers and sisters:
As you excel in every respect, in faith, discourse,
knowledge, all earnestness, and in the love we have for you,
may you excel in this gracious act also.

For you know the gracious act of our Lord Jesus Christ,
that though he was rich, for your sake he became poor,
so that by his poverty you might become rich.
Not that others should have relief while you are burdened,
but that as a matter of equality
your abundance at the present time should supply their needs,
so that their abundance may also supply your needs,
that there may be equality.
As it is written:
*Whoever had much did not have more,
and whoever had little did not have less.*

Gospel

[Mk 5:21-43 or 5:21-24, 35b-43](#)

When Jesus had crossed again in the boat
to the other side,
a large crowd gathered around him, and he stayed close to the sea.
One of the synagogue officials, named Jairus, came forward.
Seeing him he fell at his feet and pleaded earnestly with him, saying,
"My daughter is at the point of death.
Please, come lay your hands on her
that she may get well and live."
He went off with him,
and a large crowd followed him and pressed upon him.

There was a woman afflicted with hemorrhages for twelve years.
She had suffered greatly at the hands of many doctors
and had spent all that she had.
Yet she was not helped but only grew worse.
She had heard about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd
and touched his cloak.
She said, "If I but touch his clothes, I shall be cured."
Immediately her flow of blood dried up.
She felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction.
Jesus, aware at once that power had gone out from him,
turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who has touched my clothes?"
But his disciples said to Jesus,
"You see how the crowd is pressing upon you,
and yet you ask, 'Who touched me?'"
And he looked around to see who had done it.
The woman, realizing what had happened to her,
approached in fear and trembling.
She fell down before Jesus and told him the whole truth.
He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has saved you.
Go in peace and be cured of your affliction."

While he was still speaking,
people from the synagogue official's house arrived and said,
"Your daughter has died; why trouble the teacher any longer?"
Disregarding the message that was reported,
Jesus said to the synagogue official,
"Do not be afraid; just have faith."
He did not allow anyone to accompany him inside
except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James.
When they arrived at the house of the synagogue official,
he caught sight of a commotion,
people weeping and wailing loudly.
So he went in and said to them,
"Why this commotion and weeping?
The child is not dead but asleep."
And they ridiculed him.
Then he put them all out.
He took along the child's father and mother
and those who were with him
and entered the room where the child was.
He took the child by the hand and said to her, "*Talitha kum,*"
which means, "Little girl, I say to you, arise!"
The girl, a child of twelve, arose immediately and walked around.
At that they were utterly astounded.
He gave strict orders that no one should know this
and said that she should be given something to eat.

or

Mk 5:21-24, 35b-43

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and entered the room where the child was.
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which means, "Little girl, I say to you, arise!"
The girl, a child of twelve, arose immediately and walked around.
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HOMILY

This is about death. Whether it's the end of life or the end of hope . . . this death. The "good news" is that it's about the death of death. Listen to the words of the Book of Wisdom again: "God did not make death . . . God formed (us) to be imperishable; the image of his own nature. (It's) by the envy of the devil, (that) death entered the world, and they who belong to him experience it." In hearing this I was reminded of John Donne's poem, "Death be not proud." It begins "Death be not proud, though some have called you mighty and dreadful, for you are not so. For those whom you think you do overthrow die not, poor death, nor yet can you kill me." And it ends, "One short sleep past, we wake eternally and death shall be no more. Death, you shall die." So this is about the death of death.

Coincidentally, yesterday the King Tut exhibit opened in San Francisco at the deYoung Museum. The "boy king," Tutankhamun, became Pharaoh of Egypt at the age of nine and reigned for just ten years when he died from an accident. What is this exhibit about but a tribute to immortality – a belief in an afterlife. All cultures have believed in some form of life after death. Now, to be clear, in Saturday's SF Chronicle, Kenneth Baker wrote about the Tut exhibit. He wonders about its popularity – that it may have something to do "perversely with our own culture's denial of death" (June 27, page E 12). This may be true for our culture, but not for Christians. We hold that death is inevitable, but not final. We know that we will die but believe that we will rise again with Jesus Christ. It's not about the denial of death, but that death is not final.

Jesus shows us this today with the two women he heals. But first, a technical point. Notice that the gospel begins with the line "When Jesus had crossed over again in the boat to the other side ..." St. Mark gives us a clue as to what is about to happen. Remember last week, how Jesus said to the disciples, "Let us cross to the other side." And they went sailing across the lake. Halfway across Jesus fell asleep in the boat, and then a storm blew up. The disciples woke Jesus and yelled, "Don't you care that we are going to die?" And Jesus calmed the storm, then asked them, "Why are you afraid? Do you not yet have faith?" The disciples stared in awe, "Who is this man whom the wind and sea obey?" They finally made it across. No sooner did they get out of the boat when a wild man rushed up to Jesus. He was possessed by a demon. (The Lectionary skips over this story.) The man said to Jesus: "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of God?" Then Jesus exorcized the demon. The man returned to normal and began preaching about Jesus. After that, Jesus crosses again back to the other side. And this is where we pick it up today.

Jesus crosses from one side to the other. He begins on the Jewish side, around Jerusalem. Then he crosses over to the Gentile side, the land of the Greeks, non-Jews. If we were talking about the Oakland A's, we'd say the "home field" vs. the "away games." But there's a difference. When the A's are at home, they get a warm reception. When they play away, they could get booed. When Jesus is on his home turf, the people do not recognize him as the Son of God. This includes his disciples; they ask, "Who is this man?" Once, even his mother and brothers thought he may be losing his mind. But on the other side, in Gentile territory, he is recognized. The man with the demon calls him "Son of God." Later on, the blind man, Bartimaeus (that's a Greek name), calls out to him, "Son of David, have pity on me." And at the end, on Calvary, as Jesus hangs on the cross, a Roman soldier standing guard, dressed in armor

and holding a spear, says, “Truly this man was the Son of God.” For Mark, it’s the outsiders – the foreigners – who recognize Jesus first. But the “insiders” – those close to him – don’t see it until the end. Like the people outside the little girl’s house who mock Jesus when he says that she’s really not dead. The question for us is: on which side do we stand? Do we recognize Jesus as the Son of God, the One who brings life and puts an end to death? Or are we still waiting to see some sign of proof? On which side do we stand?

So today we meet these two women, one older, one young. The young one is dying at home and her father pleads with Jesus to heal her. Already Jesus has healed a few people and his reputation has spread. The father is desperate for his daughter. And Jesus goes with him. Then along the way, while walking through a crowd, a woman touches his cloak, and she’s healed. Seeing the woman Jesus and the disciples would have read the signs. This woman had a hemorrhage for twelve years. She spent all that she had, but her condition only grew worse. She was probably divorced and struggling on her own. At that time it was presumed that a woman of this age would be married. However, her hemorrhage meant that she probably could not have children. And this was one reason a man could divorce his wife. (If a couple could not conceive it was presumed to be the wife’s fault.) So now she’s on her own, and the little money she had went to many doctors and medicine. Jesus is her last chance. Reaching out to Jesus, she is restored. Her faith healed her.

Meanwhile, neighbors of the little girl arrive to tell the father it’s too late; the girl has died; you can send Jesus home. But Jesus repeats what he said to his friends on the boat: “Do not be afraid; just have faith.” It must have been a sad scene at the girl’s house. Death is always sad, but more so with a child.

And Mark mentions that she’s twelve years old. In Jesus’ day this age was significant. It’s the age at which a girl could be betrothed to a man. Her family could have planned with the family of a suitable man for her to marry him. (It may seem young for us, but remember that, at the time, most people did not live past forty. Also, King Tut was married at the age of nine!) A twelve year old girl would be thinking of the family she could have, of bringing new life into the world. But as this girl lay in her sick bed, she watches these dreams disappear. She doesn’t think of just her life, but all those other lives who will be lost.

Enter Jesus. He confused the crowd when he said, “She’s not dead, only sleeping.” And their mourning turned to mockery. They scoffed: He doesn’t know what he’s talking about. The same thing happened when he went to raise Lazarrus from the dead (John 11: 1-44). Remember – standing outside his tomb, Jesus called “Lazarrus come out!” Some murmured, “He’s been dead for four days. What can this Jesus do?” Or with the widow of Naim (Luke 7:11-17) . . . when Jesus saw her only son being carried in a funeral procession, he felt pity for the woman and called to the son, “Young man, I bid you get up!” Each time the crowd stood hushed and were shocked when the person came to life again. Some believed, but some still doubted. On the cross, some wondered, “He saved others. Why can’t he save himself?” Those closest to Him didn’t know what to make of him.

So Jesus ignores the crowd of critics, and marches into the house with the father and mother and his disciples. He takes the girl’s hand and says “Little girl, arise!” And she does. This twelve year old girl gets up and walks around. And Jesus tells the parents to give her something

to eat. I can imagine if this story were happening today the whole village would have been excited and they would have met over at Fenton's and the father would have screamed "Ice cream sodas on me!"

"Give her something to eat." Ah, but Jesus wasn't referring to a celebration. He knew that rumors would spread that perhaps the girl was not really revived, but maybe the people just saw a ghost. But ghosts don't eat. This is why Mark includes this line. Here's the point of these cures. Some may have thought that maybe the people really weren't dead. Maybe this girl – maybe that widow's son – were in a coma and suddenly they woke up. That could be, but it misses the point. The gospel writers don't bother with an autopsy. This is not "Palestine C.S.I." and the disciples are no forensic team. The point is (as we've said before) that the crowd believed them – the little girl, the son – to be dead. They believed that there was no more hope. Nothing could be done. End of story. But Jesus brings more. When we think there's nothing left, Jesus always brings more. Jesus returns what is lost, restores what is broken, and revives what is dead.

As I read about this little girl, I thought about another twelve year old – Christopher Rodriguez. I'm sure we all remember the story of eighteen months ago . . . how he was shot while sitting for his piano lesson at the Harmony Studio right down the street. The bullet pierced his spine and left him crippled. For me, it is one of the saddest stories I've ever heard. His boyhood dreams destroyed by one evil act. And I pictured him later on, sitting in his wheelchair, watching the world go by, imagining what he could be doing if only he had missed that lesson. But the story has a twist. I'm sure you read the story in last week's newspaper. . . of how he attended the sentencing hearing for his assailant last week, and of how young Christopher wheeled himself up to the man and gently scolded him. "I know you didn't mean to hurt me, but you could have hurt my mother and several other normal people. You need to know that actions have consequences." Then he extended his hand to the man and said "I forgive you." Christopher's mother was surprised. She said that they hadn't discussed this; it was all his own doing. She also said that in the fall he plans to attend seventh grade at the Oakland School for the Arts. And while he wants to continue piano, he also hopes to produce a play. In wonder of her son, she notes that, with the help of physical therapy, he can move his left leg slightly. But he doesn't dream of walking; he dreams of running.

I wonder if the Lord is saying to this twelve year old, "Little boy, I say to you, arise." Maybe it depends upon on which side we stand. Amen.

Thomas Scirghi, S.J.