

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time B/2012

The readings of this Sunday talk about the importance of life and trust in God. They show that God is capable of enhancing life in us and of destroying all that diminishes it. They also invite us to entrust our lives to God so that he may save us in our time of need.

In the first reading, the book of Wisdom affirms that our God is a living God. Therefore, everything he has created has been made imperishable. In that sense, death does not come from him, but from the envy of the devil that wants to destroy God's creatures.

What is behind this text is the idea of the fragility of human existence that is constantly threatened by the reality of death. But God is the master of life and his power overcomes death. There is also the affirmation of the truth that God, being eternal, has transmitted in all his creatures the seed of immortality. Therefore, where life is threatened by death, God can always give life anew to his creatures.

This text helps us understand what is at stake in today's Gospel as Jesus raises from death the daughter of the Synagogue's official and heals the hemorrhagic woman. First, the Gospel relates the case of one of the officials of the synagogue whose daughter was sick. Although he came to Jesus in seeking his intervention for the healing of his daughter, this latter eventually died. But, because he showed so much faith, Jesus gave back life to his daughter in raising her from death, at the astonishment of many.

The second case is about a woman who spent a lot of money at the pursuit of healing from her hemorrhage without success. Her visits to the doctors over the years, instead of bringing her relief, cost her more money than she could afford. In the end, pushed by faith, as she came to touch the clothes of Jesus in the midst of the crowd, she was healed of her disease. Like in the first case, because of her faith, she was restored to full health after many years of suffering and humiliation.

What do we learn from today's Gospel? The first point I want to bring is about the power of faith. In fact, it is so striking that in both cases described in today's Gospel, Jesus insists on the importance of faith. To the official, Jesus says, "Do not be afraid, just have faith". To the hemorrhagic woman, he says, "Daughter, your faith has saved you".

It is absolutely clear that the faith Jesus is talking about in this Gospel has nothing to do with knowledge of God or some doctrine about God. It is all about an absolute trust in him that he can deliver us from our troubles and give us what we need. That is why the hemorrhagic woman, in a simple gesture of trust, came from behind in the crowd and touched Jesus with the firm conviction of obtaining the healing. And what she wanted with the whole of her heart, happened to her instantaneously. The same is true with the official of the synagogue whose daughter Jesus raised from death.

Such examples show that nothing is impossible to God. However, we have always to remember that the healing of the hemorrhagic woman, as well as the resurrection of the daughter of Jairus, has a character of exemplarity. Of course, the woman and the girl were healed and restored to life, but they eventually one day died. Jesus saved them in order to show us that he is the master of life and death alike. What he has done with these two people, he can also do with us, but we have to trust him and believe in him.

All that brings us to the distinction we have to make between life on earth and life in heaven. We should never forget that those two people later died a physical death though Jesus saved them once from their disease. That is a sign that physical death has become part of our human life. But, it is not the last word of our life. The last word belongs to the eternal life and the resurrection in which we will share.

Hope for the resurrection and waiting of eternal life should not, however, push us to despise the present life on earth at all. Instead, they should bring us to use the present conditions of life with wisdom, knowing that here on earth, we are just pilgrims. That is why, when God heals us, he lets us taste in anticipation of the joy of heaven.

Meanwhile, as we are still on earth, what can we do? We have to help each other as much as we possibly can in alleviating the suffering of one another until the day we will all share in the resurrection of Jesus in heaven. Plus, as we need to support our brothers and sisters when they have spiritual problems, we have also to support them materially in their needs. That is the sense of the words of St Paul in the second reading as he invites the people of Corinth to live in solidarity with their brothers in need.

The second point I want to highlight is about God's time. As we have seen in the Gospel, it was only after many years, and after having spent so much energy in seeking for healing and after spending all her money in visiting the physicians, that the sick woman came across Jesus and was healed. In the same way, it was only after the daughter of the chief of the synagogue died that Jesus came to the place and raised her from death. But, why is it so that God lets us exhaust our energy and strength, and intervenes in our troubles only in the last minute?

I do not really know. This is a big mystery I cannot pierce with my mortal and human understanding. I hope that one day, when the Lord will give me the chance to see him face to face, this will be one of the questions I will ask him. What I can say, however, without risk of making a mistake and according to my human mind, is that God's time is not human time. Human time refers to the human calendar, God's time is eternal and out of human calculation.

As the Psalm 90: 4 says, "one thousand years are like one day before the Lord". According to this psalm, what we consider as an eternity of our problems is just like an instant before God. Perhaps we cry and wait for months or years with our difficulties with the impression that it lasts too long, but for God it is as though it is just happening. In God's time, everything is always present as though it is happening instantly. That is why we should never be discouraged when we struggle with problems and difficulties. We have to trust God that he will eventually put an end to our misery when his time will come. Let us, then, ask God to increase our faith and trust in him. May he help us to always count on him! May God bless you all!

Wisdom 1: 13-15; 2: 23-24; 2 Corinthians 8: 7, 9, 13-15; Mark 5: 21-43



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