

CONNECT! SUNDAY REFLECTION

13th Sunday in Ordinary Time | For Sunday, June 27, 2021

I Say to You, Arise!

Written by Rev. Mark Suslenko

Wisdom 1:13-15; 2:23-24

2 Corinthians 8:7, 9, 13-15

**Mark 5:21-43 or 5:21-24,
35b-43**



As Jesus said to Jairus, the synagogue official in today's Gospel, he also says to us: "Do not be afraid; just have faith." We often associate the word faith with trust. While this is fundamentally a true association, a deeper understanding of what faith is and does is necessary for it to be understood. We commonly interchange our usage of the words "faith" and "trust." For example, I can say to a friend, "Do you trust that what I am saying is true?" I could also say, "Do you have faith in what I am saying?" In both cases, a measure of submission based on the strength of relationship is being sought. Is this all that faith in God asks of us? St. Augustine tells us that "faith is to believe what you do not see; the reward of this faith is to see what you believe." In this sense, faith involves not only submission but a change in how one sees.

Faith allows us to see the ordinary in extraordinary ways and immerses us in a deeper experience of life. It beckons us to see our world and our role in it as an exciting journey of surprises and wonders. In the everyday comings and goings of our world we are able to go eagerly in search of that "pearl of great price," the often hidden presence of God. Faith lifts us up, by God's grace, to wonder and awe as we climb the highest mountain of knowledge and truth, properly positioning ourselves to see all God has made in the fullness of its beauty and meaning. Faith allows us to see the wholeness, healing, and unconditional love that is possible only with God. Always traveling with its close friends, hope and love, faith not only asks that we give ourselves completely over to God's will but that we allow our sight to be transformed and changed. With faith we can see what was once veiled in darkness and are equipped and strengthened to do what we never imagined could be done.

A woman as she was preparing to celebrate her 50th birthday decided to put skydiving on the top of her bucket list. She had never done anything quite like this before and thought it would be an exciting accomplishment to add to her list of experiences. Overcoming her apprehension and downright fear, she

made the arrangements to have her first dive. She remarked about how free she felt and how the world that looked so congested and busy from her usual vantage point, now took on an entirely new look. While still being able to see some particulars in the sights and activity below, what became more amazing was the expanse of it all. The sheer beauty of God's handiwork shined through. Rustling up the courage to do what she never thought she could do, she was forever changed.

This is similar to what happens to the person who discovers the gift of faith. Life changes. The trust and surrender to God that are a most necessary component of the journey soon gives way to brighter, more complete vision. While still being able to see the particulars of their lives, they are now placed within the context of the whole salvation story. God's expertly choreographed symphony plays out before their very eyes. They are at one and the same time both participant and observer with the joyful contemplative experiences of presence and grace flickering around and within. They are both the father with a daughter presumed to be dead and the daughter who is healed and made whole. They realize with the certainty found in the Book of Wisdom that "God formed man to be imperishable," with life, seen through the eyes of faith, being sustained and recreated in one form or another.

Faith tells us that it may not always be as we want. However, God, because of His mercy, will see to it that our lives continue if not in this life, then certainly in the next. When we experience our brokenness and fragility, we see firsthand our desire for healing. It serves us well to remember that physical healing is just one form of healing. There is also spiritual and emotional healing. Often, receiving the gift of wholeness and unconditional love of God in these ways can even be more profound and poignant. God is all about life and not death. We need to move beyond the mentality that God desires for us to die. It is quite the opposite. God desires that we have life and have it in abundance! God's life comes to us in many ways and can be experienced on many levels. It is always grounded in freedom. Faith sees this truth and kindles the inner strength and courage to patiently wait in love and hope to receive it.

When we look at the lives of the Church's saints and the ordinary folks who are living saints among us, it is marvelous to see what can happen with faith. Our preoccupation with certainty, immediate gratification,

PRAYER

"My Lord God,
I have no idea where I am going.
I do not see the road ahead of me.
I cannot know for certain where it will end.
Nor do I think I really know myself,
and the fact that I think I am following your will
does not mean that I am actually doing so.
But I believe that the desire to please you
does in fact please you.
And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing.
I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire.
And I know that if I do this
you will lead me by the right road,
though I may know nothing about it.
Therefore I will trust you always
though I may seem to be lost
and in the shadow of death.
I will not fear,
for you are ever with me,
and you will never leave me to face my perils alone."

-Thomas Merton

instant results, and obsession with having tangible evidence and proof are robbing us of the beauty of this search. Many are quickly becoming very superficial and shallow, and hardening themselves to God's voice calling within. We think we have it all but really find ourselves with very little without faith. Look around at our world. Spend some time watching people and taking a moment to be present to them. You will see many living examples of faith, hope, and love in action. But many others wander around aimlessly without any zest for life and without hope. Bring it to them. Jesus brought this healing power to Jairus' daughter. I am sure if you asked him, Jesus would use you to bring this same healing hope to those along our way yearning for it. Arise and go!

Rev. Mark Suslenko