

## PREGO PLUS: BACKGROUND NOTES

### THIRTEENTH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME – YEAR B

#### Second Reading 2 Corinthians 8: 7, 9, 13–15

Today's reading is concerned with a collection of money made by the Gentile churches of Macedonia, Achaia and Galatia (regions in present-day Greece and Turkey – *see below*) to help the predominantly Jewish church in Jerusalem. It was a big undertaking and Paul deals with some of the practicalities in his first letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 16: 1–4).

This financial help had been decided upon at the First Council of the Church in Jerusalem c. 51 AD. It was a way of bridging the growing gap between the Gentile churches and the Jewish church of Jerusalem.

In order to encourage them to contribute, Paul looks at their generosity, 'their work of mercy' in the light of the Gospel. As God's son, Jesus was rich, but he accepted becoming human and so made himself poor (Philippians 2: 7) so that we in turn could have riches from heaven.

However, Paul does not expect people to go completely without. It is a question of balance. Moreover, in the long term, the church in Jerusalem may be able to help the Corinthians: *'One day, they may have something to spare that will supply your own need'*.

Paul then quotes from the book of Exodus (16: 18) concerning the gathering of the manna in the desert. Everyone had as much as they needed, whether or not they had collected a great deal.



#### Gospel Mark 5: 21–24, 35–43

Today's story completes the cycle of four miracles around the Sea of Galilee, which we began last week with the calming of the storm. After curing a demoniac on the Gentile eastern shore, Jesus returns to the predominantly Jewish western shore (in effect the lake acts as a figurative boundary between the Jews and the Gentiles).

The healing of Jairus's daughter is a good example of Mark's so-called 'sandwich' technique (also called 'intercalation'). Mark starts a story (vv. 21–24); then leaves it to tell another (the woman suffering from a haemorrhage – *not covered here*), before returning to the original narrative (vv. 35–43).

#### One of the synagogue officials came up, named Jairus

Jairus is one of the few named characters in Mark's gospel. His role in the synagogue was that of manager, responsible for the correct organisation of worship. It is an honourable position and he would be regarded as a leading citizen, yet he falls at Jesus's feet and *'pleads with him earnestly'*.

#### 'Come and lay your hands on her'

At this stage of Jesus's ministry, there is no great hostility from the Jewish hierarchy. Jairus recognises him as a healer, and the laying-on of hands was a common symbol of healing by the physicians of the time.

#### Do not be afraid, only have faith'

'Faith in the Gospels is not so much a matter of belief and understanding, as it is about trust. Jesus is saying: 'Trust me'.

#### Peter, James and John the brother of James

Jesus takes with him his inner circle of disciples. They will also be present for his Transfiguration and in Gethsemane.

#### People weeping and wailing unrestrainedly

It was usual for a crowd of 'professional mourners' to support the family and friends in their grief. There would also be flute players.

#### Taking the child by the hand, he said to her, 'Talitha, kum'

Jesus is clearly not concerned by the idea that touching what everyone around him took to be a dead body would make him impure. He speaks to the child in Aramaic, his own language, quoted on only four occasions by Mark: *'Ephphata'*; 'be opened' (Mk 7: 34); *'Abba'*; 'Father' (14: 36); and on the cross, *'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachtani'*; 'My God, my God, why have you deserted me?' (15: 34).

#### He told them to give her something to eat

The child is able to take her place again at the family table, and by extension in society. Some see in this a foreshadowing of the risen Christ eating with his disciples.