

13th Sunday In Ordinary Time, Year B

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

Today's Gospel is about two women who are close to death. The Church matches today's first reading with the Gospel because it too is about death.⁵

13God did not make death, nor does he rejoice in the destruction of the living. The Church teaches that death (both physical and spiritual) is a consequence of sin. Even though man's nature is mortal, God had destined him not to die. Death was therefore contrary to the plans of God the Creator and entered the world as a consequence of sin.³ (CCC 1008) It becomes clear at the end of this reading that the author is not speaking of physical death but of spiritual death, the second death, which is separation from God.¹

14For 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,

15for justice is undying. This verse is called by some the essence of the book. As God is undying, so God's order for the universe is undying. To follow this order in personal living is to open oneself to being possessed by God.²

23For God formed man to be imperishable; the image of his own nature he made him.

24But by the envy of the devil, The tenth commandment requires that envy be banished from the human heart for it is a sadness over the good fortune of others and a sin that can open the flood-gates for other evils.⁴ Behind the disobedient choice of our first parents lurks a seductive voice, opposed to God, which makes them fall into death out of envy. Scripture and the Church's Tradition see in this being a fallen angel, called "Satan" or the "devil." The Church teaches that Satan was at first a good angel made by God: "The devil and the other demons were indeed created naturally good by God but they became evil by their own doing."³ (CCC 391) **death entered the world, and they who belong to his company experience it.** Here it is clear that "death" in this verse does not mean physical death, but rather, spiritual death because it is experienced only by the wicked.¹

2 Corinthians 8:7, 9, 13-15

This is from the second part of the letter which has to do with the collection for the faithful in Jerusalem, a collection which Paul organized not only in Corinth but also in the other churches he had founded. In addition to alleviating the material needs of the Christians of the mother church, the Apostle sees this collection as a way of showing the fraternal unity Gentile converts have with that church. It is interesting to note how delicately the Apostle broaches this subject: in the original text there is no mention of "money" or "alms". Instead, he uses a more spiritual vocabulary— "grace", "willing gift", "love", "relief of the saints".⁷

Brothers and sisters:

7As 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. The Corinthians were blessed in many ways, spiritually and economically. The collection affords them a prime opportunity to express thanksgiving to God for what they have and also to lend a helping hand to those who have not.⁶

9For 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. The life of Jesus Christ is a lesson in

generosity for though he was perfect and self-sufficient in his divinity, he became man in the form of a servant to save us from sin and enrich us with divine life. The contrast between Christ's wealth (divinity) and poverty (humanity) means NOT that he divested himself of glory in becoming man, but that he DISGUISED it behind the veil of his human flesh.⁶

13Not that others should have relief while you are burdened, but that as a matter of equality Paul does not want the Corinthians alone to shoulder a burden that should be borne by all.¹

14your abundance at the present time should supply their needs, so that their abundance may also supply your needs, that there may be equality. Paul envisions a fair distribution of burdens and blessings. Since the spiritual blessings of Israel have spread to all nations in Christ, the Gentiles are obliged to return material blessings in gratitude. In this case, the prosperity enjoyed by Corinthian Gentiles should help to alleviate the poverty of Jewish Christians in Jerusalem.⁶

15As it is written: *Whoever had much did not have more, and whoever had little did not have less.* This is a citation from Ex. 16:18. The Exodus generation of Israel lived on daily rations of manna provided by the Lord. Because he ensured a fair amount of bread to each family, there was no need to hoard it or store it away. To do so would have displayed a lack of trust in his Providence. Paul is urging believers to imitate the Lord by distributing their resources so that no one in the family of faith will lack basic necessities. Prosperity is a blessing meant to be shared.⁶ In the wilderness, each person was given about a gallon of manna a day. In the morning, after gathering the manna, they measured it and he who gathered much had nothing over, and he who gathered little had no lack.⁷

Mark 5:21-43

21When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a large crowd gathered around him, and he stayed close to the sea.

22One of the synagogue officials, This was one of the most important positions in town. His job was to organize the meetings of the synagogue on Sabbaths and holy days, to lead the prayers and hymns and to indicate who should explain the Sacred Scripture.¹⁰ **named Jairus, came forward. Seeing him he fell at his feet** Many synagogue rulers had close ties with the Pharisees. It was very likely that calling on Jesus' help was not supported by Jarius' peers. To bow before Jesus in front of all those Jewish people was a daring act of respect and worship on Jarius' part. His dignity and pride were forgotten. All he wanted was the help of Jesus.⁸

23and 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." In verse 42 we find out that the girl is twelve years of age. According to the Jewish custom a girl became a woman at twelve years and one day. This girl was just on the threshold of womanhood, and when death comes at such a time it is doubly tragic.¹¹

24He went off with him, and a large crowd followed him and pressed upon him.

25There was a woman afflicted with hemorrhages for twelve years.

26She 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. The trouble was that not only did this hemorrhage affect the woman's health, but it also rendered her continuously unclean, and shut her off from the worship of God and the fellowship of her friends.¹¹

27She had heard about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak. This woman had an incurable condition that caused her to bleed constantly which would have made her and everything she touched ritually unclean. She came from behind and, out of delicacy, touched

only his garment. She is conscious that her bleeding would cause Jesus to be unclean, according to Jewish law, if she touched him.⁸

28She said, “If I but touch his clothes, I shall be cured.” Being cured is also an early Christian euphemism for salvation.¹³

29Immediately her flow of blood dried up. She felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction.

30Jesus, aware at once that power had gone out from him, turned around in the crowd and asked, “Who has touched my clothes?”

31But his disciples said to Jesus, “You see how the crowd is pressing upon you, and yet you ask, ‘Who touched me?’”

32And he looked around to see who had done it.

33The woman, realizing what had happened to her, approached in fear and trembling. She fell down before Jesus and told him the whole truth.

34He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has saved you. Go in peace and be cured of your affliction.”

It was not the touching of Christ’s mantle that had cured her, but the faith which inspired her to seek help from our Lord. Ancient legend made this woman a native of Caesarea Philippi and gave her the name Veronica. Eusebius, in his *Ecclesiastical History* says that he saw at Caesarea Philippi a relief showing a kneeling woman stretching out her hands to Christ, which Veronica had erected as a mark of her gratitude to our Lord. This Veronica was identified with the Veronica who wiped the blood-stained face of Jesus on the way to Calvary.¹²

35While he was still speaking, people from the synagogue official’s house arrived and said, “Your daughter has died; why trouble the teacher any longer?” We are taught not to fear death—but to watch for its coming and be ready to receive it. We can best do this by so living that we are always fit to enter our Father’s House. But Christ has not only conquered bodily death, he has conquered that more terrible death which is the death of sin. In a very true sense they are dead who have fallen under the sway of sin which takes from us everything which death takes: it deprives us of the power of acquiring merit, just as bodily death takes from a man’s body every capacity of action. The sinner is as deaf to the call of grace as the man who has lost his bodily life.¹²

36Disregarding the message that was reported, Jesus said to the synagogue official, “Do not be afraid; just have faith.” This is the crux of the reading: DO NOT BE AFRAID; JUST HAVE FAITH!

37He did not allow anyone to accompany him inside except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. These were three of Jesus’ closest disciples, who were also present with him at the Transfiguration and in the garden of Gethsemane. They are likewise the only apostles Jesus renamed: Simon became “Peter”, which means “rock”, while James and John were called “Boanerges”, which means “sons of thunder.”⁹ Jesus did not want more than these three Apostles to be present for three was the number of witnesses laid down by the Law.¹⁰

38When they arrived at the house of the synagogue official, he caught sight of a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. A ritual of mourning.¹³

39So he went in and said to them, “Why this commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but asleep.” Jesus’ words are in contrast with those of the ruler’s servants: they say: “Your daughter is dead”; whereas he says: “She is not dead but sleeping”. To men’s eyes she was dead, she could not be awakened; in God’s eyes she was sleeping, for her soul was alive and was subject to God’s power, and her body was resting, awaiting the resurrection. Hence the custom which arose among Christians of referring to the dead, whom we know will rise again, as those who are asleep.¹⁰

⁴⁰And 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.

⁴¹He took the child by the hand In the sacraments Christ continues to "touch" us in order to heal us.³ (CCC 1504) and said to her, "Talitha koum," which means, "Little girl, I say to you, arise!" This is one of several Aramaic expressions preserved in Mark. He regularly translates these expressions for his non-Jewish readers.⁹ Note that Jesus does not refer to any superior power; his authority is sovereign. All he has to do is give the order and the daughter is brought back to life. This shows that he is God.¹⁰

⁴²The girl, a child of twelve, arose immediately and walked around. At that they were utterly astounded.

⁴³He gave strict orders that no one should know this Jesus was always concerned that the people would try to crown him king in a political sense rather than king of their hearts. and said that she should be given something to eat. This confirms the resurrection of the body—ghosts do not eat. St. Jerome tells us that whenever Jesus raised anyone from the dead he ordered that food should be given him to eat, lest the resurrection should be thought a delusion.¹³

Some of the material for this commentary was taken from: (1) "The Jerome Biblical Commentary," (2) "Wisdom" by John E. Rybolt, (3) "Catechism Of The Catholic Church," (4) "responding to GOD" Prepared by the Dominicans of the Central Province of St. Albert the Great, (5) "Workbook for lectors and gospel readers:2006" by Martin Connell, (6) "Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The First and Second Letters of Saint Paul to the Corinthians" With Introduction, Commentary, and Notes by Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch, (7) "The Navarre Bible: Corinthians," (8) "The Bread Of Life Catholic Bible Study" by Deacon Ken e³ Marie Finn, (9) "Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Gospel of Mark" With Introduction, Commentary, and Notes by Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch, (10) "The Navarre Bible: St. Mark," (11) "The Gospel Of Mark" by William Barclay, (12) "The Sunday Epistles And Gospels" by Monsignor Patrick Boylan, and (13) The St. Paul Center For biblical Theology Online Founded By Dr. Scott Hahn.

In loving memory of Peg Schneller, who compiled these commentaries.