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## 13th Ordinary Sunday - 27 June 2021

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**27 June 2021**

**Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Reflection by Gerard Moore

## **Introduction**

The evangelist Mark offers us a narrative which intertwines the healing of two women, one old and long suffering, one young and approaching marriageable age. Jesus' cure of the two is about much more than his power: it is about how the Gospel challenges us around the role and place of women in God's eyes. These are pivotal readings for us today. Today governments, businesses, institutions and churches across Australia are dealing with how to speak about, expose, and overcome violence and bullying, sexual assault and coercion against women. There is something to be learnt from today's reading.

## **Collect of the Sunday**

Our collect this Sunday is the first of three which we encounter in Ordinary time that have come from the worship of the Church of Milan. Some borrowing from the so named Ambrosian rite is not too surprising, considering that the ancient liturgy had close parallels to that of Rome and was also Latin based, and more recently that Pope Paul VI, the ultimate revisor of the Missal, had been the Archbishop of Milan prior to his election as Bishop of Rome.

The original setting of the oration are the prayers of fasting and preparation for the feast of Pentecost. In Milan, Pentecost was seen as an appropriate time for baptism, and the collect is replete with baptismal imagery.

The prayer reminds us that we respond to God within a relationship established by God. It is at divine invitation that we are adopted as children and live in the light. The vocabulary is evocative of the great acts of God: creation, the incarnation, the resurrection, the sending of the Spirit and baptism.

We live according to the divine will when we engage wholeheartedly and continuously in the truth revealed by God's light and splendour, including loving our neighbour and behaving in righteousness. The step away from God's adoption is to be enveloped by darkness, loss of direction, the abandonment of hope, sin and eternal death. This is not the will of God for the baptised.

## Penitential Act

Use one of the *Roman Missal* texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you revealed the Wisdom of God. Lord, have mercy.  
You show us the generosity of the Father. Christ, have mercy.  
You heal us in body and spirit. Lord, have mercy.

## First Reading

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

All of creation is fashioned by God and all creatures are wholesome.

## Second Reading

**2 Corinthians 8:7, 9, 13-15**

Pauls calls for generosity from those who have towards those who go without, reminding of the absolute self-giving of God in Christ.

## Gospel Reading

**Mark 5:21-43**

Jesus goes beyond religious and social barriers and even the barrier of death to cure two women, setting their wellbeing beyond ritual impurity and the demands of the Law.

## Reflection

In the Gospel today we have two miracle narratives woven together. Their intersection is important, but more on that below. Again, Mark expects Jesus to perform miracles, and here we have two miracles of healing, one over illness, one over death. It is worth considering that only the risen one has power over death. There is then a bit of a blunt message to the Markan community living after the Resurrection. Jesus in whom you believe has overcome death so it only makes sense that in his life he confronts illness and death - and so as a disciple where do you stand in your life around illness and death? The evangelist delivers a powerful message to his community and beyond.

So, the power of the stories is not so much in the miracle (which Mark expects) but in the signals in the narrative. Let us turn to these.

The two stories belong together and play off each other. Jesus is approached by a synagogue official and a ritually impure, outcast woman. It is synagogue officials who play a role in levelling the charge of ritual impurity. Here the official has a daughter who is dying, just as the older woman is condemned as ritually dead. It might be worth stepping back from the text a little and asking whether there is a ritual burden that has been laid upon both these females, a burden that leads to death.

The official is so worried that he will lose his daughter that he falls at the feet of this wandering preacher. In this story, the synagogue answers to the prophet! This reversal of the status quo will not last long in Mark's gospel, but here it is stark. Not only the crowds follow Jesus, but the Jewish leaders implore him as well.

Jesus follows Jarius, giving occasion for another woman to make an appearance. She is nameless, ritually impure and socially an outcast. The people give way when Jarius comes forward, and he has space to fall at Jesus feet. The woman has to push her way forward, inappropriate and awkward and dangerous, and can only touch the prophet by chance. She has to put herself in the way of the teacher while he is on the way to someone else. The two characters are in deep contrast. More contrasts will follow but first let us take up the cause of the women.

Her illness may be in her woman's body, but she has not been treated well by men. They treated her, did not cure her, and left her penniless. There is constant embarrassment, shame and penury. The result is poverty and ritual impurity. Clearly, she was not always poor, and clearly, she has fallen foul of the synagogue and its regulations. She is an outcast from faith, and this passing healer and teacher is a hope, a hope she invests in at great potential cost. In this first of the two stories, the unclean woman touches Jesus, and the healing is instantaneous. It is as though this is the sort of situation for which Jesus is predisposed. He does nothing but accept the touch, and the healing follows. There are no impediments to healing this woman, neither ritual impurity, poverty, gender. To heal her is a reflex action. It is followed up with a personal interaction, much to the annoyance of the disciples. She is recognised, calmed, her faith praised, her fears expunged, her cure confirmed, she is at peace. Now she has been raised up, she is free to 'fall down' before Jesus and speak the entire story.

Her cure is the cue for a transition in the story. It is announced that the daughter of Jarius is dead. We, who live within the time of the resurrection, know that Jesus has power over death. We should not be surprised that he continues on the way to the house. But the stakes are different now. The corpse is ritually impure and to touch it is to risk ritual uncleanness. Jesus does more however. He banishes the mourners with their rites of death and returns the scene to the family and his witnesses: the girl belongs with her parents and so he returns them to the room where the girl was laid.

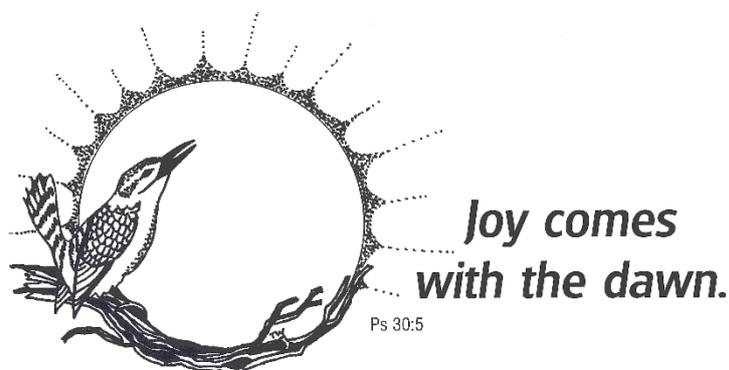
Against religious regulation Jesus takes the hand of the girl. More comes out now in the telling of the tale. Though nameless she is not a 'girl'. At 12 she is a young woman of marriageable age. Taking her hand is a strong action. She is pulled from death, returned to her family, and in being fed returned to the life of this world. Now before her is an unknown future with her own husband and her own family. She, with her father and mother, are given a life.

The stories of the two women are entwined. They are both about restoration. They are both a response to faith. They are both stories of new beginnings. They are both narratives in which Jesus is alert to what gives life, not what is restricted by obedience. They are both about a new future. They both place women at the centre of Jesus concerns.

These are pivotal readings for us today. As this is being written, governments across Australia are dealing with how to speak about, expose, and overcome violence and bullying, sexual assault and coercion against women. The stories of young women and older women continue to roll out. What we thought we knew about ourselves is being rewritten. To date the responses from men have been poor and ineffectual at best and disingenuous at worst. Women are 'pushing forward' through the crowd to make their situation known and take healing. Families are seeking a return to life for daughters. In this, how well does the Church reflect Mark's Jesus, teacher and prophet, healer and life-giver? Such a vision requires a whole of Church response. As you read this some months after writing, the hope is that power will go out from the Christian community and healing will take effect.

The other two readings have something to add. The first lection is something of a poetic match with the Gospel. The Wisdom author reflects on the divine will that we have life. Creation was fashioned for wholesome life in justice. Pain, suffering and destruction are not aspects of divine joy or rejoicing. They are part of our world, but are not part of the divine intention. The creator takes no solace in the ongoing suffering of the haemorrhaging woman or the dying maiden. There is a challenge here for us. On a tangential note, this passage from the Book of Wisdom fits well with the papal message in *Laudato si!* as it proclaims that all creatures are fashioned by God and are wholesome.

Nor does the Second Letter to the Corinthians disappoint. Paul is asking the community to donate to the collection for the other churches. It follows from an earlier appeal during which the community was quite generous. Jesus is the model, who though rich became poor so all might become rich. There is a strong rhetorical push across the text. But there is also a strong underlying point: those with abundance in the present should supply the needs of the poor, so that there may be equality. As we reflect on the women in Mark's passage, we realise that we are a long way from equality, and we are even further from understanding that Jesus took on human poverty so that we might share in a new richness, a sharing by both sisters and brothers.



# Prayer of the Faithful

## Introduction

Gathered in hope and faith, like the woman with the haemorrhage in the gospel, we bring all our needs to the Father.

## Petitions

Let us pray for the leaders of our Australian Church and all those who serve the Church. May they be open to the Holy Spirit so that the upcoming Plenary Council will lead our Catholic community into a blessed future.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Let us pray for our nation and all who serve in our government. May the Spirit's wisdom lead their actions to do what is just and good when facing the serious nature of the pandemic and climate change.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Let us pray for the homeless within our local community and for the agencies and families who offer them refuge and compassion. May we not walk past them without giving a loving response.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Let us pray for those who have recently lost loved ones. May they be comforted in their grief and healed through the care and prayers of this community.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Let us pray for all those around the world who are suffering intensely from the COVID-19 pandemic. May justice be evident in the distribution of the vaccine and the availability of oxygen for those in need.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

## Conclusion

Through the gospel we know that Jesus cured many and brought Jairus' daughter back to life. In faith we offer these needs to the Father through the power of the Holy Spirit and in the name of Jesus Christ.

**Amen.**

## Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

### GA

Come to the feast. M. Haugen. 400  
Eat this bread. J. Berthier. 205  
Eye has not seen. M. Haugen. 466  
For the healing of the nations. F. Kaan/ H. Purcell. 513  
I am the bread of life. S. Toolan RSM. 204  
Now thank we all our God. M. Rinkart/ C. Winkworth. 425  
We remember. M. Haugen. 446  
The cry of the poor. J. Foley SJ. 36

### AOV1

Come to the feast. M. Haugen. 151  
Eat this bread. J. Berthier. 125  
Eye has not seen. M. Haugen. 146  
I am the bread of life. S. Toolan RSM. 49  
Now thank we all our God. M. Rinkart/ C. Winkworth. 189  
Praise, my soul, the king of Heaven. H. Lyte/ J. Goss. 78  
The cry of the poor. J. Foley SJ. 83  
We remember. M. Haugen. 81

### AOV2

Centre of my life. P. Inwood. 170  
Praise to the Lord, the almighty. C. Winkworth et. al./ Straslund Gesanbuch. 132

### CWB

I am the bread of life. Suzanne Toolan. 718  
O Christ, the healer, we have come. Frederick Pratt Green. 759  
The Church of Christ, in every age. Frederick Pratt Green. 818

### CWBII

*Sunday by Sunday hymn suggestions*  
Great God of mercy. James Quinn SJ. 126  
Your hands, O Lord in days of old. Edward Hayes Plumptre. 129  
The Church of Christ, in ev'ry age. Fred Pratt Green. 613  
The cry of the poor. John Foley SJ. 618  
*Additional selections by Chris deSilva*  
O Christ, the healer we have come. Fred Pratt Green. 127

### S&S1

The cry of the poor. John Foley, S.J. 63

## Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 29: *I will praise you, Lord, for you have rescued me.*  
Psalm 29: Douglas Mews. CWB 271  
Psalm 30: I will praise you, Lord: Jenny O'Brien. GA 29  
Psalm 30 (29): Jenny O'Brien. JOBB pg. 70  
I will praise you Lord: Marty Haugen. LPB pg. 121