

13th Sunday of the Year B

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

Death was not God's doing, he takes no pleasure in the extinction of the living. To be – for this he created all; the world's created things have health in them, in them no fatal poison can be found, and Hades holds no power on earth; for virtue is undying. Yet God did make man imperishable, he made him in the image of his own nature; it was the devil's envy that brought death into the world, as those who are his partners will discover.

Second Reading 2 Corinthians 8:7.9.13-15

You always have the most of everything – of faith, of eloquence, of understanding, of keenness for any cause, and the biggest share of our affection – so we expect you to put the most into this work of mercy too. Remember how generous the Lord Jesus was: he was rich, but he became poor for your sake, to make you rich out of his poverty. This does not mean that to give relief to others you ought to make things difficult for yourselves: it is a question of balancing what happens to be your surplus now against their present need, and one day they may have something to spare that will supply your own need. That is how we strike a balance: as scripture says: The man who gathered much had none too much, the man who gathered little did not go short.

Gospel Mark 5:21-24.35-43

When Jesus had crossed in the boat to the other side, a large crowd gathered round him and he stayed by the lakeside. Then one of the synagogue officials came up, Jairus by name, and seeing him, fell at his feet and pleaded with him earnestly, saying, "My little daughter is desperately sick. Do come and lay your hands on her to make her better and save her life." Jesus went with him and a large crowd followed him: they were pressing all round him. While he was still speaking some people arrived from the house of the synagogue official to say, "Your daughter is dead: why put the Master to any further trouble?" But Jesus had overheard this remark of theirs and he said to the official, "Do not be afraid; only have faith." And he allowed no one to go with him except Peter and James and John the brother of James. So they came to the official's house and Jesus noticed all the commotion, with people weeping and wailing unrestrainedly. He went in and said to them, "Why all this commotion and crying? The child is not dead, but asleep." But they laughed at him. So he turned them all out and, taking with him the child's father and mother and his own companions, he went into the place where the child lay. And taking the child by the hand he said to her, "Talitha, kum!" which means, "Little girl, I tell you to get up." The little girl got up at once and began to walk about, for she was twelve years old. At this they were overcome with astonishment, and he ordered them strictly not to let anyone know about it, and told them to give her something to eat.

Meditation

Today we are invited to reflect on life and to hope in an imperishable existence. We rarely advert to life until it is threatened. Then it appears all the more precious to us for its very fragility.

The faith of Jairus, whose twelve-year-old daughter is at death's door, and the faith of that desperate woman whose life has been ebbing away with her blood for twelve years should be our faith.

At the juncture of these two intertwining stories, there is in fact but one point of emphasis.

Jesus does not disdain the naive, almost superstitious faith of the woman with a haemorrhage who furtively touches him in the hope of being healed. Nor does he ignore the frantic faith of Jairus who has no other answer for the doubting crowd. To them, it is all too clear that no one can do anything against death. For Jesus, death is but a sleep which awakens to a morning of resurrection.

Hope sleeps in each of us. We must regularly take its hand, awaken it, set it in motion.

This marvel is possible only by faith in the One who can make our nights, however dark they may be, give way to an Easter morning.