

Dear Parishioners,

Whenever I read the gospel passage for this weekend, the 13th Sunday of Ordinary Time, year B, I wonder why does Jesus respond to Jairus' plea for help so readily? Why is it the woman with the hemorrhage is so easily healed? All she had to do was touch the hem of his garment and immediately her flow of blood stopped; she was healed. But when we pray it so often seems we don't get what we ask for. Is this because Jesus is not walking the earth as he did 2000 years ago? Or, has he turned a deaf ear to our pleas? So often we hear people say that God hears our prayers but he tells us no. I find that kind of reasoning dubious. We may not know the mind and heart of God, but I find it hard to believe God would refuse us just because he wants to say no to us.

As we see these two scenes play out, however, there is a lesson to learn: healing is a process; it is not instantaneous, nor is it something Jesus did magically, effortlessly. There are, rather, stages to healing. First of all, we must believe that Jesus can and will heal us. Secondly, we have to seek him out, and thirdly, we have to let him take control of the situation.

We know that with God all things are possible. If God can set the universe in motion out of nothing, certainly he has the power to heal us. But do we really believe it? Jairus was a Jew, a synagogue official, he was not a follower or disciple of Jesus. The woman with the hemorrhage was not a disciple of Jesus; she was someone who was simply hopeless. Everything she tried failed. She lost her ability to believe in the medicines or healers of her day because nothing worked. Jesus was her last resort. He just happened to be traveling through her town and all she had to go on was the notion that she simply had to touch him and she would be healed. Both Jairus and the woman were desperate, hopeless, at their wits' ends - but they believed.

Belief is the first step toward healing. No matter how many times we have tried to pray without the outcome we hoped for, we still must believe in the infinite love of God and that he will bring us the healing we need in our lives. I don't believe God tells us "no, not this time my child, you don't deserve it." I do believe God responds in mysterious ways and that, in the end, not only are our prayers answered, but we are given an abundance of grace far beyond what we hoped for.

We need to seek the Lord where he can be found, and call on him when he is near. Both Jairus and the woman went to great lengths to make their request of Jesus. Jairus had to leave his daughter's side; he also had to put aside his own belief system in his quest to find Jesus. The woman had to risk being in public all alone, a crime in her time punishable by severe beating. She put aside her fear and pushed her way through the crowd to touch Jesus.

To what lengths are we willing to go to seek the healing love of God? Is it enough to utter a prayer in our thoughts, at our own convenience with the hope that that's all we have to do? Maybe so. However, I wonder if it might also require that our hearts have to be in it too. Healing comes after the pain; it is the final outcome of suffering. When, in our own pain, we unite our hearts to the Sacred Heart of Jesus we can trust that he will heal us - but he must be in control.

Jesus had to expel the scoffers and doubters from Jairus' home in order to heal the little girl. Then he helped her up and gave the instruction to feed her. When the woman touched Jesus he had to know how his healing power had been used. It could not happen without his knowledge. He had to be in control.

God's grace is not cheap; it is not magic. It always has the power to heal us, save us, and bring us to new life but this does not happen on our own terms, or in our own time. We believe God can heal us and we humbly beg in our suffering. But God's healing happens in God's way, God's time, God's love. The mystery of his healing often unfolds without our full awareness. A lot of times it is long after the suffering has ended that we realize God has healed us and in his love has given us even more than we asked for. But in the end we must always remember that God is in control.

In joyful hope,

Fr. Tim Seigel,
Pastor