

Commentary on the Gospel for Sun, Jul 1st 2018

A PONDERING

In the spiritual life, honesty is not a negative.

Generally speaking, when people ask us how we are, we don't tell them the exact truth. We say, "Not Bad", or "just fine, how are you?" They don't tell the truth either. With real close friends, we might say some less positive things.

In the physical area, illness and infirmities are negatives, the truth really does hurt. In the spiritual life, honesty about our conditions is exactly where Jesus meets us. He was always meeting people in conditions in which they desired not to be. If they were to have denied their physical truth, then there would have been no healing words or touch. Honesty is the better policy with ourselves and in our being met by God. The truth will set us free and easy in the spiritual life.

REFLECTION

Our First Reading for this liturgy is from the Book of Wisdom which is the section of the Hebrew Scriptures known as Wisdom Literature. These writings have proverbs, poems, songs, and stories all about God's being God and our position with God and our relationship with God's creation.

One of the first issues, about which we read today, are statements about human life as wonderfully made in God's image and how death has interrupted God's creation. God created life. Death entered through envy of the devil. Those who entered and live in the camp of the devil experience death as an ending.

All creatures are "wholesome", and those who live in the awareness of their imperishable nature, will experience God's "justice" which cancels death as a curse. There is no "drug of destruction" nor "domain" of evil in the original creational gift. There is destructive sin introduced to creation to disturb the balance of God's love and the human response of praise and thanksgiving. This injustice, sponsored by the devil is re-justed by the constantly-creational love of God. God's justice is faithful compassion and the antidote to the drug of envy.

Our Gospel has one healing narrative interrupted by a second. The opening story is about the little daughter of a synagogue's official, who is sick at home. While Jesus is responding to that explicit and public request, a woman who is having a loss of blood privately reaches out physically for her healing. To more fully understand the woman's condition and her reaching out just to touch the fringe of Jesus' garment, confer Leviticus, chapter fifteen, verse 19-29. Blood was regarded in the Jewish tradition as a participation in the life of God; it was the source of life itself. Any loss of blood by a woman made her unclean no matter what the cause, even child birth and she was not to be touched until she regained a state of purity according to ritual practices.

The woman is desperate having tried everything and had exhausted her finances. Jesus was her last resort and death would be her final end without His saving solution. She had made a gesture of faith and by her faith in Him, she was healed. As with most healings, it was the beginning of her going

elsewhere and living in peace according to the new purifying experience of believing in Jesus' saving person and mission. She had been honest and so was Jesus.

Jesus' journey to the house of the official was interrupted, but his mission continued. There arises a bit of dramatic tension as Jesus arrives at the official's house. Mourners are assembled outside the house according to custom. They believe the child has died, Jesus has come for life. The faith of the father of the girl has allowed Jesus to continue the girl's life. They switch from mourning to mockery as He enters and speaks words of gentle power. "Little girl, I say to you, arise." He is touching her with His hands and words. She, as with the woman who was healed, gets up and gets back to her living.

Jesus is the "Person of Justice". He is re-establishing creation. Physical illness, in the Gospels, is a foil, a situation, a symbol for the fracture between God and humanity. Jesus has come to free us from a sense of impurity, a sense of blindness, a sense of paralysis and a sense that we do not know who we really are. We are all those who are constantly saved by our faith in the God of merciful justice. Our healings, as with those of the Gospels, is both from a "something" and more importantly, for a "something". The "going", the "walking around" the mission of living in community with others is the full import of Jesus as Savior. No person is healed of anything so that, that person can live in isolation. The bleeding woman was not allowed into the community until she had done the ritual offerings. The little girl was supposed to be already outside the human family. The fracture of the body is healed to be an agent for healing of the human fracture in our world.

"O bless the Lord, my soul, and all that is within me bless His Holy Name." Ps. 103, 1

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