Homily: 13th Sunday Ordinary Time (yr. B, 2024)

The following story is an oldie but goodie; I briefly thought of not telling it because I’m sure the vast majority of you have heard this told in one way or another. But for the sake of just the one who possibly hasn’t heard it, because it teaches such a valuable lesson, I decided to go ahead......One spring; a terrible flood engulfed a rural area. It stranded many, many families and households, including an elderly woman. As she stood at her kitchen window, a boat appeared. The driver said; Ma’am, climb aboard and save yourself. No, the older woman replied, I trust the LORD, HE’LL save me. The driver shook his head and drove off. The next day, the flood waters had risen to the second floor of the house. As the woman stood at a second-floor window watching the water rise, another boat appeared. The driver yelled out; Ma’am; climb aboard and save yourself. No thanks, the woman replied once more. I trust the LORD, HE’LL save me. This driver too was dumbfounded but drove off. The next day, the water had literally risen to the roof of the house. As the woman now sat on the roof watching the water continue to rise, a helicopter appeared. The pilot called down over a loudspeaker; “I’ll drop a rope ladder to you, climb aboard and save yourself. For the third time in two days, the woman continued to be firm. No thanks, I trust the LORD, HE’LL save me. The pilot too, in disbelief, shook his head and flew off. The next day, the flood waters continued to rise until they had entirely engulfed the house, and the elderly woman drowned. When she got to Heaven, she said to St. Peter; before I go inside, I want to register a complaint. I trusted GOD would save me from the flood, but HE let me down. St. Peter was as shocked as her would be rescuers had been on earth. Ma’am, St. Peter began; I don’t know what more the LORD could’ve done for you. HE sent you two boats and a helicopter...... On one level, the woman got it right. Don’t we hear it all the time from Scripture and other spiritual books, Haven’t we heard it on almost every retreat we’ve ever been on? In fact, we heard it last week, and we hear it again this week. Do not be afraid, just have faith. So, what did the woman get wrong? The woman afflicted with hemorrhages, and Jairus, the synagogue official, give us a clue. Notice, both don’t stay home, pray and trust in GOD. They take action, leave their homes, and seek JESUS out. In different ways, they presented themselves before JESUS with their need. The woman afflicted with hemorrhages believes If I but touch HIS Clothes, I shall be cured. We’re told Jairus comes forward; falls at the Feet of JESUS and pleads earnestly with HIM to cure his daughter. In the words of one writer; “.......the two people in today’s gospel do more than just trust in JESUS. They go a step farther. They do their part. They make use of the ordinary means GOD gave them to obtain the healing they need.” This is where the woman in the flood made her mistake. She forgot that GOD normally acts in our lives through ordinary means. She didn’t seem to realize that we are all called to do our part and cooperate with GOD by using the normal, ordinary means HE gives us. Maybe the problem was she didn’t want to be saved by ordinary means; maybe she expected something like the RISEN LORD coming out of the clouds, lifting her up and putting her down on dry land. While we can all admit that sounds awful nice; and would be real nice if CHRIST did that in our lives from time to time; but it doesn’t take a rocket scientist to figure out real quick; CHRIST usually doesn’t operate that way. Notice, I said usually; and not never. Yes, HE wants to heal us and make us whole. Yes, we’ve all heard of miracles and maybe we’ve had the privilege of witnessing a few or they’ve happened to people pretty close to us. We’ve all heard of those unexpected miracles of healing. People who were given a year to live, ended up living a lot longer or haven’t died yet. We’ve all heard stories of people who prayed for a cure and later when they went for tests, no trace of cancer or whatever illness they had could be found. So, occasionally those instant miracles happen. But most often answers to prayers are going to be much more subtle than fantastic displays of Divine power and glory. The elderly woman may have had great faith; but she placed her trust only in the miraculous; she didn’t seem to have the ability to see an Angel when he came as a full blooded human being. She couldn’t seem to get it, that GOD was trying to save her through very ordinary means and was making Angels out of very ordinary people. The spiritual writer Jay Comier stresses the fact that sometimes miracles can be found in ordinary everyday life; “the simplest act of outreach or the humblest offering of forgiveness can effectively be the touch of JESUS’S clothes that restores hope and raises up the stumbling and fallen. In our selfless giving to those in need, in our humble offer of prayer and support to the afflicted and broken in our midst, we continue the healing work of JESUS experienced by the woman afflicted with hemorrhages. In the same vein, Moms and Dads know that parenthood is a full-time vocation that demands everything they have for the sake of the children that depend on them. Jairus, is a model of such dedicated parenthood. Mark describes him as an official of the synagogue, a man of considerable authority in the Jewish Community, what some would call an establishment figure. But Jairus’s love for his daughter enables him to risk his standing in the community and the reproach of his neighbors to ask this anti-establishment Rabbi to save his daughter’s life. Not only is the daughter restored to health, but Jairus and his family are transformed as well by the experience. Right from the very beginning, the Ministry of JESUS was committed to restoring what was lost. From casting out demons to repairing crippled limbs, JESUS was making right what was wrong. The woman afflicted with hemorrhages and the Raising of Jairus’s daughter, are a return to the order that the Creator had originally intended for HIS Creation. The woman afflicted with hemorrhages is so convinced that JESUS will help her that she fights her way through the crowds just to touch HIS clothes. She trusts not only the Power JESUS Possesses but the depth of HIS Compassion and love for her. JESUS reveals a GOD WHO seeks not judgment or vengeance but restoration and healing. And did you notice at the end what JESUS calls her? Didn’t HE call her; daughter? Didn’t JESUS say before, that whoever does the Will of MY FATHER is MY Mother, Brother and sister? So, in essence, JESUS is saying to her; you’re now part of MY Family. Your Faith has saved you. Your faith has restored you to relationship with GOD. And what could be more natural in the Creation JESUS is restoring than a child coming back to grief stricken parents? This healing Ministry of JESUS in Mark’s Gospel recalls GOD’S own hand at the dawn of creation. The Book of Wisdom proclaims; that HE fashioned all things that they might have being and HE formed us to be imperishable, in the image of HIS OWN Nature. Jairus’s daughter has been brought back complete and entire. This is GOD’S SON rejuvenating fallen creation so that it might be whole again. According to some scholars, Jairus’s longing for his daughter’s life, is a sign of our desire, for a return to the way GOD intended creation to be from the beginning. That divine light is deep within all of us. Listen closely; at this very moment the Kingdom is upon us, quiet as a whisper. JESUS is reviving us here at this Eucharist; instead of telling someone else to feed us; HE is feeding us HIMSELF with HIS OWN Body and Blood. HE feeds us with HIS Body and Blood that we might continue HIS Healing Mission to the world. May JESUS be our hope in times of despair, may HIS be the hand we grasp when we fall, may HE be the Light that leads out of the darkness of fear.