

St Pius & St Anthony 13th Sunday Ordinary Time Year B2

I confess that I am guilty at times, *not now of course*, of being one of those storytellers that start out with one story, and suddenly slip into another, before getting back to the original one and wrapping it up. If the return happens smoothly, then it is all okay, but what I am really confessing here, I guess, is that might not always get back to the original tale smoothly—and that's when I say, "Now what brought that up, Where was I going?"

But, I'm in good company, because we have a wonderful example of such 'holy meandering' from Mark's gospel today. I like to think of St Mark as the unofficial saint of 'storytellers prone to tangents' (*or do people say, "go down rabbit holes?"*)! Mark is my kind of guy – Multiple examples can be identified in Mark's gospel of where he begins one story, then veers into another, before coming back to the original one and finishing it. Today we start hearing about Jairus' sick daughter needing healing, then we slip into a miracle of a another woman healed in the crowd before getting back to Jairus' original case. Mark does this 'tangent storytelling' several (9) times in his gospel (*Some scripture scholars call this 'Mark's sandwiches', as Mark sandwiches or 'embeds' one story into another--Another great example is Mark 11:12-25, where first Jesus points out a fig tree not fruiting, and then Mark tells of Jesus cleansing the Temple, before following up on the original story of the tree, now it is dead and barren-symbolic of fruitless ritual of Temple worship!*) Now I grant that for best effect, we have to keep the tangents tightly connected, and not offer too many sidesteps. Mark usually limits his detours to one!

So let's look closely at what Mark presents to us. We begin by hearing about Jesus seaside again likely teaching in a crowd, when he is approached about a special request to come heal a man's gravely ill daughter. Of course, Jesus is personal and makes house calls, and so off they go together. But 'a funny thing happened on the way to the house'. So, Mark has Jesus take a detour-he pauses on the way, when a seemingly incurably wounded woman comes up to Jesus and sneaks a healing from Him by simply touching his cloak! A bonus! Extra healing along the way! I initially suggest that this 'sandwiched in' healing here is about building confidence in Jesus' healing authority-some people may have insinuated "Can Jesus pull this off, does He have it?"- Jairus' daughter is really sick-she doesn't just have a fever, she may be unconscious-near death" This confidence building miracle on the way to Jairus', is meant to persuade the crowd. Jesus really does have this covered. Look, he can heal without intending it-Healing grace just pours out from Him. What a powerful miracle – healed by simply grasping His cloak even if just for a second. This is just a confidence-trust building exercise leading up to even greater miracle when the original story resumes.

A minute ago, I mentioned that storytellers have to keep tangents tightly connected. Mark does this by using so well signal details, matching indicators that tie stories together. One here is the repetition of the number 12. The woman with hemorrhage had suffered **12 years** no cure from doctors- (Mark 5:25). Well, the little girl of Jairus is guess how many years old? Mark 5:42 says, "12" years old. *(Another connection here will be the addition of the detail of how Jesus applies His uniquely personal touch (physical touch) to both miracles --Mark 5:26, says the woman suffered greatly "at the hands of many doctors" before finding herself now healed by the gentle healing touch she initiates with Jesus and Jairus' dead daughter will actually be brought back to life by Jesus' hand Mark 5:41 "He took the child by the hand")*

Another tight connection and signal detail between these two stories is the mention of the title 'daughter'. Of course, Jairus says, "Come please, it is my daughter" (Mk 5:23) and Jesus will use this same title affectionately to heal the long-suffering older woman, saying, "Daughter, your faith has saved you." (Mk 5:34) But after this detour stop, reports come that Jairus' girl has died. Is this the end, then? No, Jesus is just warming up. Again, this detour was no real detour, but only meant to build trust in His healing power. He tells Jairus after hearing such deflating news, "Don't fret, have faith" (Mk 5:36). I can imagine Jesus embracing Jairus' shoulder and saying, "Come on, I have this, let's go." Upon arriving back at the house, there is a lot of dramatic grief being expressed and commotion, but now undeterred (undetoured?) Jesus invites only the smaller group of family, Jairus and his wife, Peter James and John to enter into the girl's room and Jesus proceeds to heal/raise her back to life! More than Healing, he resurrects her! *(There is a striking reminiscence here of Lazarus' death, with all the grief commotion and the death partly being attributed to Jesus' delay along the way to Bethany before Lazarus' resurrection in John 11).* I see the two stories related as steps on a journey of an increasing one's Trust in Jesus authority over sickness and death. He can do this. We witness 2 cases of healing: Jesus can heal young and old, he can heal here or there, he can heal uncomfortable but also fatal illness, he can do it by great effort and he can do it by simply brushing alongside you. Jesus is master of health & life!

Yet, I find even more in Mark's telling of these stories together. He is showing how loving, and how personal Jesus is to all of us. How does Mark do this? Let me count the ways. Look at how personal Jesus is: First, He makes house calls- going along with Jairus to the home. Secondly, such great efforts can fill up a schedule so fully, (travel time etc)- yet even with a swelling schedule now, notice how personally Jesus stops to seek and speak with the woman who received the quick drive-by healing. He stopped, took time to personally encounter her. That is how Jesus loves! Third, when they arrive at the home, and meet a chaotic crowd,

Jesus demands that they be alone – give some dignified privacy, away from the commotion – he puts the crowd out. Fourth, He approaches the girl herself, takes her hand (healing touch) and addresses her personally, (He might have talked **at** her- **over** her- even talked **as if she wasn't right there in the room**-doesn't that happen sometimes in hospital settings- 'I am here in the bed you know'!), and Jesus called her back to life! And finally what I especially see as endearing from Jesus is **how aware He is** of the awkwardness the girl may feel afterward, with all its attention and spectacle, can she live normal life now? To prevent such later gossip like "Oh you are the dead girl come back, etc", Jesus asks for discretion and privacy for her by telling them, "Don't speak of this and go spreading it all over", and Jesus final expression of 'personal' care, Jesus expresses His empathy & understanding of her exact situation and **asks that she be fed** – give her something to eat (popsicle!) – she has to be hungry after languishing in bed sick for days. Can't we marvel at all of those compassionate details Jesus exhibits to let us know He cares, He heals. He comes to us. He is so 'personal' a savior to us!