

[Readings: Wis. 1:13-15; 2:23-24; Psalm 30; 2 Cor 8:7, 9, 13-15; Mark 5:21-43]

What do we make of all the controversies and contradictions in our world, in our country, and in our Church? Truth and Justice will prevail. If not in this world, certainly at the end of this world and in the world to come. I wonder how many decisions made by the popular and the powerful would be different if they thought of the Four Last Things – Death, Judgment, Heaven and Hell.

Most people will go to any lengths to avoid talking about or thinking about death. We fear and dread it, and when it comes for us or for those close to us, we are angry and even more fearful. People spend billions of dollars avoiding it, delaying its effects, or trying to remain perpetually young. But as the old expression goes: the mortality rate in life is 100%. The violent deaths of so many people over these past few weeks is proof that none of us “knows the day or the hour.” What does God say about death? Our First Reading says “God did not make death” – an odd statement, given that all things must die. God says through the inspired author of the Book of Wisdom that all creation is good. God takes no delight in death and destruction, and these are never God’s intentions.

So... If God made everything good, why doesn’t God just “fix” everything? The “death” spoken of here is the unnatural and avoidable kind: war, violence, starvation, disease and injustice. This “envy of the devil” describes HUMAN actions rather than the reaction of a vengeful God. It’s not up to GOD to make things right -- you and I are the ones to make things right. It’s up to US to “fix” things that can be avoided or reconciled.

When we fail to bring peace, fellowship, nourishment, health and justice, it is unfair to get angry with and to blame God. Natural biological death is not a punishment, but an essential element of creation. And death, when it is understood as separation from God, is met with God’s response: the gift of eternal life. Jesus Christ, Who died an unnatural and violent death, is the promise of a new life, an eternal life without sorrow or pain.

The power of God to do this is limited only by our own attitude. Faith makes healing possible. In almost all of the Gospel healings, Jesus declares that

it is the faith of the individual that makes the healing possible. It seems that God can exert a positive, active healing power on our behalf, but it must be met by an open and receptive power that only WE possess. God intends for us to have life and to have it abundantly. God does not afflict us with death and disease as some sort of punishment or test. Life will deal out many painful situations, but only you and I can decide how we will respond to them.

When the Lord called my sister Kathy four years ago, I asked her if she was ready to meet the Lord. "Are you ready for your transition?" I asked. She responded very peacefully. "Yes. And it will be quick and peaceful." It was.

Negativity, fear and doubt have to give way to faith, trust and hope. We who have much of this do not need more. But perhaps our call today is to be a positive witness to those who have less. To "pay" it forward, or better still, to "pray" it forward! St. Paul is not calling us to some socialistic commune in today's Second Reading. He is asking us to meet everyone's needs equally.

While we are meeting our needs and the needs of others, doesn't it seem that the task is constantly interrupted? Life is an endless series of interruptions. If you're not being interrupted, you're not living. One bishop defined the interruptions of his day as the "real work" that God sends his way for him to do!

Jesus would agree. During His Galilean ministry, He escapes one mob only by taking to the sea. Docking on the far shore, He encounters another crowd. Mark gives us one of his brilliant little details to spice up the scene: As the crowd moves in, Jesus "stayed close to the sea." Keep the boat handy, boys. We may need a quick getaway!

An important man named Jairus breaks through the throng and pleads with Jesus to save his little girl's life. If Jesus had a sermon planned or any sort of agenda for that crowd, He abandons it quickly to follow Jairus. So too does the large, claustrophobia-inducing multitude.

Meanwhile, at least one member of that group has another agenda for Jesus and is determined enough to pursue it. She reaches out to snatch a miracle from Him. And guess what? It works.

This is the only miracle in all of the Gospels in which someone steals a

healing. You gotta give credit to that poor woman with the hemorrhage problem. She even startles Jesus! This is the sort of interruption that's downright unique to His experience as Son of God. He just has to acknowledge it -- and her.

Interruptions, after all, were part of Jesus' business. Maybe the lesson we should take home from this is that we should treat our own daily distractions with a little more respect. Jesus could be calling us to do His work, to be Christ to others, through those very holy interruptions.

He may be calling to you and me. "Get up!" His voice is strong, commanding, and vital. "Get up!" Life is frightening, when it intrudes into the realm of death. Hear his voice now. He is shouting. There is so much death. We are asleep with death, so it takes a loud voice to wake us.

Death is chaotic. Jesus Christ has come into the world to deal with the chaos of death. Jairus rejoices; the old woman tells the whole truth.

What is the whole truth? Surely, the Way, the Truth and the Life could order her chaos. In this fallen world, in this world suffering from sin and death, there's plenty of chaos. Jesus came into the world to deal with death and chaos.

And we Christians are meant to share this fact with the world. We are to go to the ends of the world, as joyful, missionary disciples, announcing the Good News that chaos will not win.

Against all odds, all our evidence, God will order the chaos. But He needs our cooperation and help to do it! AMEN!