

(Food for thought)

Gospel: Mark 5: 21-43.

Tales of two women



Our Gospel today presents us with a "story-within-a-story." First, there is an encounter between Jesus and a man named Jairus. The second encounter between Jesus and a nameless woman.

St. Mark tells us, "*So Jesus went with him.*" Jesus not only responds immediately, but has reversed roles - Jairus leads, Jesus follows, and they hurry to his home. Here Jesus is exemplifying what he talks about so often: that the leader must become the follower, just as the first must become the last, the master must become the servant, and the teacher must become the learner. There must be no clinging to status nor lording it over others. So Jesus follows Jairus. But just when we are being drawn deeply into this story, there is a sudden interruption.

"There was a woman," the Gospel tells us. She too interrupts Jesus. The very moment she touched Jesus, immediately she felt herself healed; and, at the same moment, Jesus felt depleted. Before she could move, Jesus called out "who touched my clothes?" Despite her fear and shaking, this was a woman of integrity. No attempt to lie or justify herself. No sooner had she been discovered than she "told him the whole truth."

In an instant she becomes a public witness to her faith and her courage is acknowledged and rewarded by Jesus, who calls her "my daughter," tells her that indeed her faith has made a miracle, and sends her off in peace. She was free: finally, totally free.

By the time they arrive at Jairus' home, the weeping and wailing had already begun. Jesus declares that the girl was simply sleeping. Jesus immediately makes physical contact: taking her by the hand, he speaks to her. "Immediately the little girl got up,"

This suggests two things to us: first, that the girl's family, the disciples and all those present have the capacity to make a difference in particular situations of need; and, second, we also are not without some resources of our own, some nourishment, if only we dig deep and share. Whether we are facing situations of physical hunger, or even the eucharistic famine that affects so many Christian communities today, we must not simply pray for miracles, but remember that, in the face of the great need of our sisters and brothers, we can and we must "give them something to eat ourselves."

Faith without action is pointless.

