

13th Sunday in Ordinary Time, B Cycle, June 27-28, 2015

First Reading: Wisdom 1:13-15; 2:23-24 (*God did not make death; God fashioned all things*)

Responsorial Psalm 30 "I will praise you, Lord, for you have rescued me"

Second Reading: 2 Corinthians 8:7, 9, 13-15 (*Jesus Christ, though he was rich, became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich*)

Gospel: Mark 5:21-43 (*Fear is useless, what is needed is trust!*)

*♪ O Poverty, source of riches, Jesus grant to us one heart with the lowly.
O pobreza! Fuente de riqueza: Señor siémbra nos alma de pobre. ♪*

That chant is one that was composed by the Taizé community in France. The Spanish, "alma de pobre." is a little different from the English. It's almost impossible to translate. The original French is similar: "Un coeur de pauvre."

It is something like "The soul or the heart of being poor."

The best translation I could come up with was, "One heart with the lowly."

The chant is a reference to the words of St. Paul in the 2nd reading, "Christ made himself poor, so you might become rich."

The scriptures today are an invitation to put on the mind of Christ, to imitate his love by reaching out to the poor, as Jesus did in today's Gospel and by looking at our own limitations from a different perspective.

Both the song and the letter of Paul ask a question:

"How can poverty be a source of riches?"

The woman in the Gospel was healed, before she was cured. Her poverty connected her to Jesus. She was barred from the Temple because of her constant menstrual bleeding, and when she touched Jesus, it made him ritually unclean as well. [To be ritually unclean meant that he would be banned by the Jewish law from entering the Temple.]

The *grief* of Jairus connected him with Jesus. He was made rich, not only by the raising of his daughter, but by being connected with the woman who had been unwelcome in his synagogue. They were now *both* disciples of Jesus.

St. Paul in the 2nd reading is asking the people of Corinth to have "one heart with the lowly", as the song says. In the reading today, he is taking up a collection. When he asks for money to help the poor, he is challenging the Christians in Corinth long ago and all of us today to have the heart of Christ.

I had a friend who lived in Compton, California - a poor section of LA. His name is Bill Harris. His story is a powerful example of how poverty and limitation can be a source of overflowing grace.

In college, he was a halfback for Ohio State when they won the national championship. At the age of 35 he was diagnosed with M.S. and given three years to live. He refused to give up and responded to his handicap by turning to Jesus - the way the woman and Jairus did.

In 2006, much more than 3 years later, he and his wife Pat celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. I knew him from Marriage Encounter. He was, at that time, a pastor of a black Baptist Church in Compton and neither his small stature nor his illness prevented him from being an effective negotiator between rival gangs. He is one of the most inspiring preachers I have ever heard.

Whenever you met him, or spoke on the phone, the first words he would say were, "Good Morning!" It did not matter whether it was 9 in the morning or 9 at night, or anytime in between, he would always say "Good Morning." He did that because of a verse in the Responsorial Psalm we prayed today, "at nightfall weeping enters in, but joy comes in the morning."

You see, because of his illness, he felt better in the morning, and got very tired as the day went on, but he always wanted to express the joy of his faith no matter how he felt. As he got older he was confined to a wheelchair, but his spirit still burned. His limitations and the faith they have called forth from him and his wife have made him a rich man. And knowing him has enriched me and many others.

How is *my* poverty a source of riches? How is yours? It can happen when we are sick or shut-in. At times like that we become Christ for someone who visits, remembering his words, "I was sick and you visited me."

It can happen when we make known our need to another, whether it is the need for forgiveness or an experience of being powerless, and are connected with Christ through the love of another or the sacraments of the Church.

About 5 years ago, my friend Bill faced the ultimate poverty as he left this world and his wheelchair behind and joined St Peter & the woman who reached out to Jesus & Jairus and his family at the banquet of heaven.

Now he is living in the eternal morning of the God who did not make death, as the first reading says, celebrating the truth that God formed us to be imperishable, creating us in the image and likeness of God. Death itself became a doorway to new life.

That is the life we celebrate as we come together at Eucharist. In a few moments we will remember the poverty of Christ who died & the riches of the life he shared with us when he was raised from the dead.

Today's Scriptures are a call to share our gifts and to make known our needs. We are called to have the heart of Christ, who made himself poor so we could receive life. We are called today to believe and live the words of Paul set to music:

♪ O Poverty, source of riches, Jesus grant to us one heart with the lowly. ♪