

SPIRITUALITY

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

cf. 2 Tim 1:10

R: Alleluia, alleluia.

Our Savior Jesus Christ destroyed death and brought life to light through the Gospel.

R: Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel Mark 5:21-43; L98B

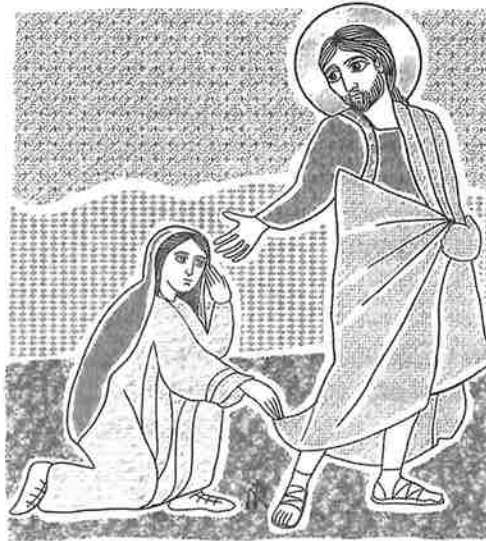
When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a large crowd gathered around him, and he stayed close to the sea. One of the synagogue officials, named Jairus, came forward. Seeing him he fell at his feet and pleaded earnestly with him, saying, "My daughter is at the point of death. Please, come lay your hands on her that she may get well and live." He went off with him, and a large crowd followed him and pressed upon him.

There was a woman afflicted with hemorrhages for twelve years. She had suffered greatly at the hands of many doctors and had spent all that she had. Yet she was not helped but only grew worse. She had heard about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak. She said, "If I but touch his clothes, I shall be cured." Immediately her flow of blood dried up. She felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction. Jesus, aware at once that power had gone out from him, turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who has touched my clothes?"

Continued in Appendix A, p. 297, or Mark 5:21-24, 35b-43 in Appendix A, p. 297.

Reflecting on the Gospel

It is to be hoped that the whole of this gospel is proclaimed today, as the option for the shorter version cuts out the portrait of the woman with a hemorrhage that is framed by the two-part narrative of Jairus's daughter. Mark deliberately structures his narrative so that the two stories relate to one another.



Jairus, a synagogue official, appeals not to the synagogue but to Jesus for the healing of his daughter. As Jesus and Jairus are on the way to his house, they are interrupted. A woman who is hemorrhaging, probably from a gynecological cause, worms her way through the crowd and touches his clothes. In first-century Palestine, a menstruating woman was regarded as ritually "unclean," excluded from relationships with her husband, family, friends, and worshiping assembly. Anyone or anything with which she came into contact during those days was also regarded as unclean. For twelve years, Mark tells us, the desperate woman had wasted money on physi-

cians, and becoming even worse she had endured a living death of alienation. Regarded as a "contaminant," she should not even have been out in a pressing crowd; but she is ready now to risk being identified in the desperate hope that if she could only touch Jesus's garment she would be cured. (In Greek, the word translated here as "cured" is also the word for "saved.")

As she touches Jesus, the woman knows immediately that she is healed. In the depths of her body there is a sigh of relief and joy. When Jesus asks, "Who has touched my clothes?" the woman comes forward, falls down "in fear and trembling," but caring nothing now about who hears her story. Then from being nobody's daughter, disowned as wife, or mother, or sister, or friend, she hears herself named by Jesus as "Daughter." Jesus sends her away in peace, for her faith in him has brought not only physical healing that allows her to return after twelve years to her normal everyday relationships, but also establishes a new relationship as a member of the family of faith.

And so as Jesus continues to Jairus's house, now as someone who has violated taboos and been "contaminated" with ritual uncleanness by the woman, word comes that the girl has died. But Jesus encourages Jairus to have the same faith as the woman. When they reach the house, Jesus faces ridicule, scorn, and the ultimate enemy—death. With the girl's parents clinging desperately to the last thread of hope, Jesus takes the girl by the hand and tells her to "arise!" That Mark has retained in this narrative the mother tongue of Jesus and those with him, adds to the precious intimacy of the miracle. After rising from the dead, she begins to walk around, and Jesus tells the young woman's parents to give her something to eat—a sequence of events that parallels the resurrection appearances of Jesus himself and has eucharistic memories for Christian communities gathered as we are today for a meal of thanksgiving and nourishing.

The young woman is, says Mark, twelve years old. Blood now courses again through her body and, at about the age of beginning menstruation, she now has

Gospel (cont.)

Mark 5:21-43; L98B

But his disciples said to Jesus,
"You see how the crowd is pressing upon you,
and yet you ask, 'Who touched me?'"
And he looked around to see who had done it.
The woman, realizing what had happened to her,
approached in fear and trembling.
She fell down before Jesus and told him the whole truth.
He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has saved you.
Go in peace and be cured of your affliction."

While he was still speaking,
people from the synagogue official's house arrived and said,
"Your daughter has died; why trouble the teacher any longer?"
Disregarding the message that was reported,
Jesus said to the synagogue official,
"Do not be afraid; just have faith."
He did not allow anyone to accompany him inside
except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James.
When they arrived at the house of the synagogue official,
he caught sight of a commotion,
people weeping and wailing loudly.
So he went in and said to them,
"Why this commotion and weeping?
The child is not dead but asleep."
And they ridiculed him.
Then he put them all out.
He took along the child's father and mother
and those who were with him
and entered the room where the child was.
He took the child by the hand and said to her, "*Talitha koum,*"
which means, "Little girl, I say to you, arise!"
The girl, a child of twelve, arose immediately and walked around.
At that they were utterly astounded.
He gave strict orders that no one should know this
and said that she should be given something to eat.

or Mark 5:21-24, 35b-43; L98B

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to the other side,
a large crowd gathered around him, and he stayed close to the sea.
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