

Reflection on Mark 5:21-43
- 13th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B – 28th June 2015

Today's Gospel gives us wonderful insights into faith. Jairus the *synagogue official* who is a person of standing and rank in the community has a *desperately sick daughter* and he wants Jesus to heal her. He takes great *risks* to come to Jesus. There is a large crowd and we are told twice in the Gospel that they are *pressing round him*. In the crowd we can assume that the ritually unclean were also present which would have put Jairus himself at *risk* of then becoming ritually *unclean* because of the contact. But Jairus is desperate and will do anything to have his daughter healed of her illness. He comes directly to Jesus.

Then we meet the woman with the *haemorrhage for twelve years*. This woman is the poorest of the poor, the absolute opposite to Jairus. She is unwell. She is a woman. She is nameless. She is ritually unclean. She is rejected. She has spent everything she had in an attempt to be healed only to find she is *getting worse*. She too is part of the crowd *pressing in on Jesus* but unlike Jairus who approaches Jesus directly *she tells herself if she just touches his cloak she will be healed*.

In the middle of all this there is Jesus. He is open to everyone regardless of their social, political or religious standing. He won't be bound by rules and laws of exclusion or inclusion, or favour the rich over the poor. He simply responds to every cry regardless of where or who it comes from. We are told that when the *woman touched his cloak* Jesus *was immediately aware that power had gone out of him*. What is this *power*? What this seems to be saying is that any real act of faith will have an impact upon the world around it – it will be noticed. Any *risk of faith* will be made evident in our world. Faith is something alive and full of life but at the same time it can undoubtedly feel very *risky*. Therefore entering into the *risk of faith* can be frightening.

Jesus tells Jairus: *Do not be afraid: only have faith*. He tells the woman: *my daughter, your faith has restored you to health; go in peace and be free from your complaint*. Then he tells Jairus' supposedly dead daughter in the midst of ridicule: *little girl, I tell you to get up*. This little girl is twelve years old and lived a life of privilege in contrast to *the woman* who has suffered a *haemorrhage for twelve years* and has been left with what seems like nothing. This Gospel story is full of contrasts and opposites and it is Jesus who brings LIFE into the midst of it all and they were all *overcome with astonishment*.

In our own experience of Jesus are we also *overcome with astonishment* by the *risk of faith* we see emerging around us and within us? If we are not then perhaps we need to ask ourselves why we are not. Richard Rohr says: *All great spirituality is about what we do with our pain*. Faith invites us into our pain and to bring the Mystery of that suffering into this relationship with the Spirit of Love – with Jesus. It is often our fears that cause us the most pain. But faith when it is real will open us up to walk into our pain and suffering.

Faith, it seems to me is more a verb – faith will open into risking death so as to discover ever deepening Life. A living faith will take us where we once would not have dared to go or even thought of going. It will open us to a world that will *astonish* us. One certainty of this living faith is that it will never allow us to sit on our hands in apathy and ignorance nor allow us to be comfortable while there is any suffering in our world including within ourselves. Faith is the prime mover of Love. Therefore we cannot truly Love without faith.

When we look at our world we might well wonder or ask ourselves where on earth faith and Love are hiding? Political and religious systems seem to be collapsing (or are *desperately sick*) around our ears. Fear is being incited all around us. Our beautiful Earth is *haemorrhaging* with our constant attacks and abuses upon her. But we seem to think we are powerless to do anything about what is *pressing all round us*. This is the great deception or lie of our time because we are anything but powerless.

Whenever we feel locked up in our fears today's Gospel so powerfully invites us to *get up* and walk into and beyond our fears, trusting that the Spirit of Love will meet us there with great Love, compassion and mercy.

Marianne Williamson a spiritual activist gives us these well-known and profound words: *Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. **Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.** It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, and fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people will not feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It is not just in some of us; it is in everyone and as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give others permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.*

Will we enter into the *risk of faith* and *fall at the feet of Jesus* and *tell him the whole truth*? Will we take the *risk of faith* so that the *light comes into our darkness*? Will we dare to *touch even the clothes* of this Spirit of Love living in and through everything and everyone? Jesus tells each of us today to **get up** and Live. Our future wellbeing is *desperately* reliant upon our response.

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