

Homily: 13th Sunday of Ordinary time: Cycle B: 2021: Wis 1: 13-15; 2: 23-24; Ps 30; 2
Corth 8: 7, 9, 13-15; Mk 5: 21-43

“The Interplay of Divine Healing and the Redemptive Meaning of Human Suffering”

1. **One of the most powerful passages in all of the Gospels is read today** from my perspective as a priest. It has always touched my heart and spirit deeply, even though it can be easily lost in the midst of the larger Gospel passage which surrounds it of Jesus bringing the little girl back to life. I’m referring to the anonymous woman suffering from hemorrhages who is healed by Jesus. **This episode serves as a model for us human beings of how we are to seek the Lord’s healing in whatever area of our lives we need it in: *be it physical, emotional, psychological or spiritual healing***. Many people need an extra dose of healing in light of all the challenges surrounding the Pandemic since March of 2020. The first thing that is important to note is: God the Divine physician often works through human agencies: priests, doctors, nurses, psychiatrists, counselors, etc. Ultimately it is God who is always the healer, and sometimes in all honesty the natural remedies don’t work as is noted today in the passage about the woman with the hemorrhages, as it says this woman had been to doctor after doctor and had only gotten worst. Some of us have had that sad and frustrating experience. **At that point she truly needed a physical and spiritual miracle to recover her health of body and soul and so she turned to Jesus who healed her because of her Faith in His power to heal**. We shouldn’t turn to Jesus as a last resort, but along with seeking natural remedies should at the same time beseech for God’s healing in our lives: in fact that needs to be the foundation of everything we do.
2. **Why doesn’t God always work a miracle when we think we need one?** Well, the saints tell us God will only work a miracle if it is for our eternal well being. He is looking out for our long term best interests. **A miracle is brought about if it will help us spiritually; if it would lead to pride or complacency or presumption it won’t be brought about by our loving Lord**. The miracles we usually desire are **physical** healings - which do occur sometimes. But even more powerful are **moral** and **spiritual** miracles: **moral miracles** when people are set

free from serious habits of sin that they have been enmeshed in for years or decades, e.g., people who turn away from the homosexual lifestyle and are set free from that enslavement, or **spiritual miracles** in which God reveals Himself to people in a definitive way, in a moment of visitation and conviction, in which the person now comes to see in a way they never saw before the reality of God, and are given the strength to put Him at the center of their lives, and to make the Catholic Faith in all its varied dimensions the treasure of their hearts which they now want to permeate every aspect of their existence. **Truly amazing!** And not the normal way we function on our own without God's grace. Do we pray for these miracles in our life and for others as well? Do we seek out Jesus like the woman with the hemorrhages in the Gospel? Every time we receive Holy Communion we should ask Him for a special grace of healing for ourselves or someone else – but never to receive Him in the state of serious/mortal sin. We are literally reaching out and touching Him. **The same thing when we go to the Sacrament of Healing and Forgiveness: namely Confession.** Do we ask Jesus for a special grace of healing in some area of weakness and sin when we go to Confession? See also people having near-death experiences – a bad priest in Nebraska who had a near death experience and came back and changed his life.

3. **What if we pray for a miracle and the prayer seems to go unanswered, and we continue to suffer? Does God not care about us? NO!** He cares about us so much that He is forming us into the crucified image of His Son, each day if we let Him through His grace and the power of the Holy Spirit which someday will lead to the image of the Resurrected Jesus as well. **Mysteriously sometimes God does not take away our suffering, be it physical, emotional, psychological or spiritual because He sees if we bear it in union with Jesus, we will be purified and matured and like the branch on the vine pruned so we can bear more spiritual fruit as we heard in the Gospel a few weeks back.** Suffering helps us to focus on the things of eternity: if we look at the Crucifix and unite it with Jesus and don't turn in on ourselves, which is always a serious temptation when we are suffering on any level. **Suffering does make or break us as human beings. It**

either matures us spiritually or causes us to become more selfish and bitter - we have seen this dynamic play out before our eyes during the Covid pandemic of the last 16 months – some people have cracked and some people have matured – or a mix of both. God permits suffering because of his respect for our free will and He wants to bring a greater good from it. Suffering often is the only thing that wakes us up spiritually to the reality of God. This may be the reason why, with some exceptions of course, why when things are going well in our lives, especially when we are young and healthy, that we tend to easily forget God and the things of Faith (1st Communion and Confirmation recipients this weekend – don't forget God as you move through life). Remember Jesus mysteriously **did not take away human suffering** when He died and rose for us, but **transformed** it. He makes it the material of holiness - if we have Faith in Him and bear it in love in union with Him and in company with Our Blessed Mother for the good of our souls and offer it for the conversion of others per Our Lady of Fatima. In relation to our neighbor: many souls are only won for God by others being willing to suffer for their conversion in love, and I think this is more and more the case in this very difficult time in human history. The venerable Archbishop Fulton Sheen said decades ago that: *the greatest tragedy in life was wasted suffering* > by not realizing how much good it can do for souls, our own and others - if united in love with Christ. Or as St. Rose of Lima said: *if we knew the spiritual value of suffering for the conversion of souls, we would ask the Lord for more in love for Him and for souls, esp. those entrusted to our care in our life and vocation.* So while we pray for miracles in our lives and for the lives of others - and keep doing that as it is a very good thing - we need to also pray for a greater love for the Cross and for a deeper understanding and embracing of the redemptive meaning of suffering for the good of our soul and the souls of others. God bless you.

Recommended Reading:

On the Christian Meaning of Human Suffering. Apostolic Letter. Pope John Paul II. Pauline Books and Media. Boston, MA. 1994. www.pauline.org or www.vatican.va.