

Bible Study

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, cycle B

Opening Prayer: (Sign of the Cross) “Lord our God, all truth is from you; for you alone are the source of wisdom. Give us the joy of hearing your voice in the words we read today and grant us the peace that comes with tasting the depth of your goodness. May our reflections lead us to know you better and to love you more. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.”

Focusing Questions:

1. When did God give you extra strength this week?
2. Can you also recall a time this week when you were tempted by something that was not of God?

Commentary before the First Reading: Wisdom 1:13-15, 2:23-24 (notice the verses are from two chapters)

The Book of Wisdom was written 100 years before the birth of Christ, for Jews living in the midst of an advanced pagan society in Alexandria, Egypt. Some elements of the pagan lifestyle were somewhat attractive, even to Jewish believers. As you hear this reading, think of “death” in a broader meaning than just the end of physical life. The writer’s point is that faith has its rewards, both in this life and in the next.

Read the First Reading aloud.

1. What broader definition of “death” could the writer have been describing for a Jew living in a predominately pagan society?
2. According to the author, what was God’s purpose in creating man, woman, and other creatures?
3. Were Adam and Eve not created in order that at the end of their life on earth they could be with God in heaven forever? (see verse 2:23)
4. Then, where did physical death enter in?

Commentary before the Second Reading: Second Corinthians 8:7, 9, 13-15

As we continue reading from Saint Paul’s Second Letter to the Church at Corinth, we come to the portion where he urges the Corinthians to take up a collection to help the struggling Christians in Jerusalem. His line of reasoning might strike us as being a little manipulative: if Jesus could be so generous as to give up heaven in order for us to be able to share heaven with Him, then perhaps the Corinthians could also be generous with their fellow Christians in return. That is the “generous act” to which he refers in the first verse of the reading.

Read the Second Reading aloud.

1. In what way did we become “rich” by Christ’s impoverishing himself?
2. What is the theological (spiritual) reason given by Saint Paul for why we ought to be generous with those in need? What is the “trade-off” that he is holding out to the Corinthians if they give generously now?
3. Does Saint Paul mean that we should give until giving becomes a burden to us? Explain how one knows how much to give.
4. Can you point to practical ways that the Church continues to live out the reasoning which Saint Paul outlines in those last verses of the reading?
5. In what way can we rightly say that Jesus turned the punishment for sin (death) into a blessed experience?

Commentary before the Gospel Reading: Mark 5:21-43

The two miracles related in this week’s Gospel reading are part of a series of dramatic examples in Saint Mark’s Gospel that show Jesus’ divine nature. As we see, great crowds followed Him everywhere He went, and both the influential of their society (synagogue leaders) as well as the frequently forgotten (widows) were filled with faith. Their faith can be seen in the practical nature of their actions. This entire “feel good” atmosphere will come to a crashing halt in next week’s Gospel reading when we read of Jesus’ first return to his home town.

Read the Gospel Reading aloud.

1. Which of these 2 miracles touches you most deeply? Is there a reason for that?
2. Which words of Jairus demonstrate the depth of his faith in Jesus? (Note that those words do not necessarily mean that Jairus believed Jesus was the Messiah; however, he was sure that God could act through Jesus.)

3. What healed the woman – touching the cloak, believing she would be healed, Jesus divinely knowing she was there, magical power that went out from Jesus in all directions, or something else?
4. Describe the contrast between Jairus' family and their friends who came to mourn and offer support.
5. Notice that the widow had suffered hemorrhaging for as many years as the girl had been alive. Do you think that is just an interesting coincidence or do you think it has symbolic meaning?
6. In a society that believed in ghosts, what would have been important about the last sentence?

Applying the Readings to our Daily Lives

1. Have you ever turned to God in a time of desperate need? What did you ask for, and what happened?
2. Not everyone who asks God for a miraculous healing receives that favor. How do you think God decides when to heal and when to allow suffering to continue? What does that say about the goodness or the wisdom of God?
3. When praying for someone who is ill or injured, is there a better way to speak our concern other than telling God to heal the person? In other words, what should be our mindset when praying in a time like that?
4. Do you believe in the healing power of touch? Tell about your experience of it.
5. Try to sum up in one statement what all three of these readings say about living with faith. What does God seem to want you, personally, to learn from reading these Scripture passages today?

Closing Prayer

Loving and generous God, you have given us life and you sustain us in life each day. In the person of Jesus you have revealed the fullness of your love. Yet we often turn to you only in times of great joy or of great need. Teach us to live constantly with an awareness of your presence and love, seeking your grace in every situation. We ask this through that same Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.” (Sign of the Cross)