

**Mass with Oblate Faculty
January 31, 2017**

There is quite a bit going on in the Gospel passage today, isn't there? St. Mark uses this wonderful structure of putting one story in the middle of another to show more clearly the power of faith over doubt and despair. It is a very poignant message for us given the feeling so present in our society in these days. The message is a beautiful gift God has given us as we gather to celebrate this Eucharist in prayerful solidarity.

What faith Jairus showed when he approached Jesus in that crowd. He walked up completely confident in Jesus' power to save his daughter, even as she lay dying. Jesus knew his faith, and immediately started to journey with him to care for his beloved child.

This faith is mirrored by the woman who had suffered so long from her hemorrhaging. This woman who had been in pain for over a decade, who was suffering, who was destitute from seeking one treatment after another, and who had always found nothing but disappointment, she heard about Jesus and knew he was the one to help her. She made her way through the crowd, simply desiring to touch the Lord. What faith she had. Her thoughts show us clearly her confidence in the Christ: "If I but touch his clothes, I shall be cured." She was not disappointed in her faith. She was open to the saving power of God, and she received it because of that openness.

But this tale is not just about faith, it is also about doubt and despair. When word reached the group that Jairus' daughter had died, they all had different reactions. So many gave up hope immediately: "Why trouble the teacher any longer?" Some gave into the despair that makes us cruel and sarcastic, as we can see in their ridicule of Jesus and of Jairus' unwavering faith. Of course, we know, this faith was also rewarded. Jairus' daughter was not only cured from her illness, but indeed revived from death. All of this because of his amazing faith. Faith conquers despair and doubt, and faith brings new life.

Today we have different illnesses in our world. Many are dying, starving, destitute, alone, abandoned, stranded, imprisoned, discarded, and despairing. It is probable that God will not be supernaturally curing all of these injustices with a simple word. But nonetheless, we are called to be people of faith. It can be easy to forget how we are to maintain this identity. Thankfully, Pope Francis is a good shepherd who reminds us: "It's prayer that preserves faith; without it faith falters!" (25 May 2016).

May we be in solidarity in prayer together, no matter what. May our prayer sustain our faith in the Lord who loves us, and each of his daughters and sons throughout the world. His words are our hope: "Do not be afraid; just have faith." Help us Lord to be people of prayer and communion who "keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, the leader and perfecter of faith."