

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time – B  
Fr. Chad S. Green  
Holy Family Catholic Church  
Kirkland, Washington  
01 July 2018

Wisdom 1:13-15, 2:23-24  
Psalm 30  
2 Corinthians 8:7, 9, 13-15  
(See 2 Timothy 1:10) Mark 5:21-43

*Jesus Makes Us Clean and His Gift of Faith Saves Us*

Deacon Ben Bray – formerly our Seminarian Ben from last year – was here at Holy Family yesterday morning to serve as a Deacon at Mass with us for the first time since he was ordained one month ago. After Mass, he and I were catching up a little bit and, now that he’s a new deacon, we were talking about how preaching is going. So I asked him if he had any ideas to inspire me for my homily today; if there was anything about today’s Gospel that he would like me to tell the parish. He said, “Tell the people that they should not touch Fr. Chad’s chasuble and expect to be healed!”

+++

Are there any current or former baseball card collectors out there? I’m not sure if kids still collect baseball cards today, but my brother, our friends, and I were pretty into collecting baseball cards when we were kids in the late 1980’s and early 1990’s. I think that was a peak time for the baseball card industry. I have many good memories of saving up our money and riding our bikes with our friends to the baseball card shop in town, to buy packs of Topps, Donruss, Fleer, and Upper Deck cards, hoping to get our favorite star players, like Ken Griffey, Jr., or the newest star rookie cards.

At first it was fun to collect the cards of our favorite players; look at them and read the statistics; trade them with friends; and then stack them up in a box or wrap them with a rubber band for storage. But then we started to learn that they were more “valuable” if they were something called “mint condition”, that is, if they were perfect and without any blemishes. So

we started to learn how to protect them by putting them into plastic sheets. But even that wasn't quite good enough, as each time a card was touched and slipped in and out of its plastic sheet, there was a risk of even the slightest damage ruining the mint condition. Eventually we learned that the only cards that were truly mint condition, were those that were never even touched by human hands.

So what began as a fun activity or toy for us kids to play with, soon became something that had more monetary value if it was *not* played with *at all*. Merely touching these cards was something that tainted them and reduced their perceived value. Therefore, opening a new pack of cards could be exciting – but also risky, because there was no way to preserve their mint condition.

+++

It's not just baseball cards that can be like this. Any kind of collectible needs to be in mint condition – untouched by human hands – in order to retain its value. Star Wars figures and other toys are most valuable when they are kept in their original packaging from over thirty years ago – untouched by human hands. Works of art are for looking at – not touching with human hands. Nature preserves and gardens are set apart – in order to be kept free from human contact.

These restrictions against human contact are meant for a good purpose – they protect something important or fragile from being damaged. Or they preserve something so that it can be appreciated and enjoyed by many people. But whether these protective measures are for a good purpose or not, the underlying message that they send is that human touch defiles, damages, or ruins things. That human beings are in some way unclean, and the things that humans come in contact with lose their value or importance.

+++

Jesus came into our world to show us a different perspective. He was not afraid of human contact. From the beginning of His ministry, He was not afraid to enter into all kinds of situations that society and religion had labeled as socially or physically unclean: to drive out unclean spirits and demons; to let the crowds gather around Him; to cure those with diseases.<sup>1</sup> He was not afraid to eat with and go to the homes of tax collectors and sinners.<sup>2</sup> He was not afraid to travel to distant regions and be close to people from different cultures and religions.<sup>3</sup>

Jesus did this first of all because He loves us and wants to be close to us.<sup>4</sup> Jesus is not afraid of any of us. He never sees any of us – any person – as unclean.<sup>5</sup> He's not afraid of our sins, our thoughts, our diseases, our addictions, our questions or doubts, our messy situations. He sees each of us – He sees all people – as worth rescuing and saving from the sins that make us feel unclean.<sup>6</sup> He came to take away the sins of the world.<sup>7</sup>

Jesus was continually amongst the crowds and repeatedly in contact with people that society considered “unclean.”<sup>8</sup> He was not afraid of human touch; He was not afraid that people would make Him unclean. The opposite is the case for Jesus. Rather than our situations and our touch making *Him* unclean – it is our contact and our experiences with Him, His power, and His holiness that makes *us* clean.

Sometimes He showed this in ordinary ways: by simply being with people considered unclean outcasts. Other times He showed this in extraordinary ways: by signs and miracles of driving out unclean spirits and healing people with unclean diseases. The purpose of His signs and miracles was not to draw attention to Himself or create hysteria – though that is what often happened.<sup>9</sup> The greater purpose of His signs and miracles was to strengthen our faith and hope.<sup>10</sup> To strengthen our *faith* in Him, and our *hope* in His promise to set us free from sin and save us for eternal life with Him in Heaven.

+++

We see this by the fact that Jesus healed many people – but He did not heal *every* person.<sup>11</sup> And when He healed people, He used it primarily as an opportunity to highlight their faith. Notice what Jesus said to the woman in today's Gospel:

He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has *saved you*."<sup>12</sup>  
Not, "Your faith has *cured you*."

There is an important distinction between being *saved* for eternal life and being *cured* of a physical disease. Also notice what he said to Jairus, the synagogue official:

"Do not be afraid; just have faith."<sup>13</sup>  
Meaning, "Do not be afraid *of death*; have faith *that I have power over death*."

With these two encounters, Jesus was explaining that the physical healings were not a reward for their faith. Rather, the physical healings were a visible sign that revealed their faith and hope. A way for Jesus to affirm and strengthen their faith in Him and their hope in His greater purpose: to save all of us from sin, and to bring us through death into eternal life with Him in Heaven.<sup>14</sup>

Furthermore, these healings were also an opportunity to give the gift of faith to all those who witnessed it – including all of us here today who have heard it.<sup>15</sup> Our job today is to continue to pray for Jesus' healing power in our lives and in our world. More importantly, our job is to constantly pray for an increase in our faith and hope.<sup>16</sup> This will help us to better see Jesus' healing power already at work in our lives in more ways than we realize, and help us to trust in His promise to set us free from sin and bring us to eternal life with Him in Heaven.

+++

The woman with the hemorrhage was cured on that day. But she would one day get sick again. Jairus' daughter was brought back to life in this world on that day. But she would one day die again. That's simply part of being human in this world.<sup>17</sup>

What got them through those things – what gets all of us through these things – is the memory of Jesus' signs and miracles that point to His future promise – and, more importantly, the gifts of faith, hope, and love that are strengthened by them.

---

<sup>1</sup> Mark 1:21-45

<sup>2</sup> Mark 2:16

<sup>3</sup> Mark 3:7-8

<sup>4</sup> John 1:10-14; 3:16-17

<sup>5</sup> Wisdom 1:14; 2:23

<sup>6</sup> Psalm 30:2

<sup>7</sup> *Roman Missal*, The Order of Mass No. 130: "Lamb of God, You take away the sins of the world..."

<sup>8</sup> Mark 1:21-28, 40-45; 3:7-12; 5:1-20, 21-43

<sup>9</sup> People were amazed at Jesus (Mark 1:22, 27; 4:41; 5:20, 42);

Crowds gathered around Jesus (Mark 1:28, 32-33, 36-37, 45; 2:2-4, 13; 3:7-10; 20; 4:1, 36; 5:21, 24, 27, 30-31)

Jesus told people to tell no one (Mark 1:34, 43-44; 3:12; 5:43)

<sup>10</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* 548: "The signs worked by Jesus attest that the Father has sent him. They invite belief in him. ... So miracles strengthen faith..."

<sup>11</sup> CCC 549: "By freeing some individuals from the earthly evils of hunger, injustice, illness, and death, Jesus performed messianic signs. Nevertheless he did not come to abolish all evils here below, but to free men from the gravest slavery, sin..."

CCC 994: "Already now in this present life he gives a sign and pledge of [raising up those who have believe in him] by restoring some of the dead to life, announcing thereby his own Resurrection, though it was to be of another order."

<sup>12</sup> Mark 5:34: "He said to her, 'Daughter, your faith has *saved* you. Go in peace and be *cured* of your affliction.'"

*saved*: Greek word is *sōzō* (σώζω)

*Strong's Concordance* G4982: to save, i.e. deliver or protect (literally or figuratively): heal, preserve, save (self), do well, be (make) whole.

*cured*: Greek word is *hygiēs* (ὑγιής)

*Strong's Concordance* G5199: healthy, i.e. well (in body); figuratively, true (in doctrine): sound, whole.

<sup>13</sup> Mark 5:36

<sup>14</sup> Adrien Nocent, "Year B: Thirteenth Sunday: God, Author of Life" in *The Liturgical Year, Volume Three: Sundays Two to Thirty-Four in Ordinary Time*, translated by Matthew J. O'Connell (222):

"To the evangelist, however, the faith of the woman and of Jairus can be regarded as of the right kind. To the woman, who had defied the prescriptions of the Jewish law for someone in her condition, Jesus says, 'Daughter, your faith as saved you. Go in peace and be cured of your affliction.' His statement says two things: faith has saved the woman, and she is cured. That is, there are two healings—one bodily, one spiritual. We should also note that St. Mark has already said that the woman was healed at the moment she touched Jesus' garment, because 'power had gone out from him.' But this observation is of little moment. The important thing is that Jesus wishes to give salvation and life to those who believe."

<sup>15</sup> CCC 548: "But his miracles can also be occasions for 'offense', they are not intended to satisfy people's curiosity or desire for magic. Despite his evident miracles some people reject Jesus..."

<sup>16</sup> Saint Andre Bessette (1845-1937): "It is surprising that I am frequently asked for cures, but rarely for humility and the spirit of faith. Yet, they are so important..."

---

<sup>17</sup> CCC 646: “Christ’s Resurrection was not a return to earthly life, as was the case with the raisings from the dead that he had performed before Easter: Jairus’ daughter, the young man of Naim, Lazarus. These actions were miraculous events, but the persons miraculously raised returned by Jesus’ power to ordinary earthly life. At some particular moment they would die again.”