

**13th Sunday in Ordinary Time – June 27th 2021**  
**A Reflection by Fr Sylvester O’Flynn OFM Cap., Rochestown, Cork**

**Touching the Lord in Faith**

Today we read about two miracles which show the divine power of Jesus. He healed the woman who had suffered from a haemorrhage for twelve years. And he restored life to a girl of twelve who had died. On some Mass leaflets the healing of the woman is omitted for the sake of brevity, a great pity as it is such a wonderful story of faith. We can apply these manifestations of the power of Jesus to our own lives.

The woman's haemorrhage corresponds to various ways that our hope and moral energy drain away. Guilt over our past can drag us down. Fear inhibits us, negative thinking darkens the mind, a history of weakness and failure drains away all hope.

The miracle of bringing the dead girl back to life shows the life-giving power of Jesus. In one sense it anticipates our hope of sharing in his resurrection after death. But we can also connect with the power of Jesus to bring back life to anybody whose spiritual life is dead.

Whether our problem is the haemorrhaging of energy and hope, or feeling spiritually dead, the lesson of the gospel is to reach out and touch the Lord. Believe in Jesus as one with a power higher than any other. In a personal prayer from the heart, hand your life and problems over to Him. Invite Him to be what the name of Jesus means ... Saviour, one who saves.

**Reaching out to touch the Lord**

Touching the Lord is a wonderful image of faith. There may have been crowds pressing around Jesus. It is likely that many people reached out a hand to touch him but there was one person who touched Him in a way that drew power out of him. This was the touch of faith. "My daughter, your faith has restored you to health; go in peace and be free from your complaint." A popular hymn expresses it beautifully.

*Reach out and touch the Lord as He goes by.  
You will find He's not too busy to hear your heart's cry  
He is passing by this moment your needs to supply.  
Reach out and touch the Lord as He goes by.*

**Hands are the heart's landscape**

When Karol Wojtyla, later Pope John Paul II, was a young man, he was very keen on theatre and poetry which kept the native culture alive when Poland was under Nazi occupation. One evening, after a hard day's work in a quarry, his bruised hands inspired a poem which began with this line: "Hands are the heart's landscape." One's hands can be like a photographic memory of past events. In the absence of live sport during the Covid lockdown, sports journalists had to be creative. One writer hit on the idea of photographing the hands of retired hurlers. Each picture opened up a flow of memories of old games and characters. It was a fascinating feature each week.

**The hands of Jesus**

The frequent references to hands and touching in the gospel invite us to meditate on the hands of Jesus.

The hands of Jesus were welcoming. I'm sure that when he invited people to follow him, a gesture with his hands accompanied the words. In one of his greatest parables, when the Prodigal Son returns, his father ran to him, clasped him in his arms and hugged him. This warm embrace is one of the greatest revelations of what God is like.

Jesus invited the children to come to him on a day when the Apostles were trying to keep them away. Then he took them in his arms and blessed them.

The hands of Jesus also brought healing. Jairus, the father of the twelve year-old girl, pleaded earnestly with Jesus to come and lay his hands on the girl to heal her. When he did eventually reach the house, the girl was dead but Jesus took her by the hand, saying, "Little girl, get up."

On the occasion when a leper pleaded on his knees for Jesus to cleanse him, contrary to the rules of social distancing from lepers, Jesus stretched out his hand, touched him and healed him.

We also see the hands of Jesus in the act of giving and sharing. At the miracle of the loaves and fishes we see that he took the bread, blessed it, broke it and gave it to the apostles to distribute. The same actions took place at the institution of the Eucharist at the last supper.

Those healing and giving hands took on a new shape on Calvary. As the nails pierced the skin and hit the nerves, those open hands jerked in closure, coiled in pain. Those hands which welcomed, healed and gave were now closed because he had given his all.

### **Your hands**

If you were to look at the landscape or history of your own hands, what would you see? Are they in the shape of a fist, hard, hurtful and violent? Or hands tightly knotted in tension and self-protection? Or do I rejoice to see hands that are open, welcoming, soothing, caring. Or hands that are artistic, playful, relaxing? Hard-working, helpful, creative?

### **Prayerful hands**

A German artist, Albrecht Durrer, left a famous sketch of hands at prayer. Some say that these were the hands of his brother, Hans, himself a promising artist, who did not develop his talent because he had to take up a job to support his more talented brother. If you are familiar with the picture, you will notice that these are not young, supple hands. The knuckles are knarled, one small finger is quite hooked, and the palms are no longer able to clamp together. But the praying hands are at the level of the heart, bearing the landscape of life, and pointing towards heaven.

### **Prayer**

*"Lay your hands gently upon us, let their touch render your peace.  
Let them bring your forgiveness and healing,  
Lay your hands gently, lay your hands."* (Cary Lantry)