

HOMILY

The Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time *June 28, 2009*

Rev. Andrew A. Czajkowski
St. John the Evangelist Parish
Davison, Michigan

A business executive became depressed. Things were not going well at work, and he was bringing his problems home with him every night. Every evening he would eat his dinner in silence, shutting out his wife and five-year-old daughter. Then he would go into the family room and read the paper, using the newspaper to wall his family out of his life.

After several nights of this, one evening his daughter took her little hand and pushed the newspaper down. She then jumped into her father's lap, wrapped her arms around his neck, and hugged him tightly. The father said, "Honey, you're hugging me to death!" "No, Daddy," the little girl said, "I'm hugging you to life."

This was the greatness of Jesus. He took people where they were and hugged them to life. That is precisely what we see Jesus doing here in the passage from Mark 5. He is loving needy and hurting people—hugging them to life.

Consider today's passage. It has a story within a story. As Jesus is on the way to a home where a 12-year-old daughter was dying, a lady afflicted with blood hemorrhaging for twelve years reaches out and touches the hem of his robe. The lady is totally healed!

Notice how gentle and loving Jesus is with her as he gives her a new lease on life. He doesn't chastise her for interrupting him. He doesn't critique her theology or her superstitious expectations. He gives her act the most gracious possible reception; and, although we know the healing comes from him, he humbly gives her the credit. He says to her, "*Your faith has saved you.*"

The rest of the story is even more remarkable. As they continue on to the home of the dying girl, they tell Jesus that it's too late. The little girl has already died. I'm sure at that moment Jairus, the little girl's father, as any father would be, was devastated. His only daughter snatched away. But again, Jesus is gracious and generous and loving. I can imagine Jesus' touching Jairus' shoulder and saying, "Dad, don't be afraid now; only believe and she will be made well."

They go on to the house. The people are weeping and mourning. They scoff at him, thinking he can do anything about this. But Jesus goes to that little girl and he resurrects her. He loved her into life.

Like these two real-life vignettes, the good news is that the Lord loves *us* into life. He starts with us where we are. Do you have a marriage problem? A job problem? An alcohol problem? A drug problem? An emotional problem? A health problem? Does someone you love have one of these problems—a son or daughter, a parent, a dear friend? Jesus will start with you wherever you are willing to start.

Perhaps it would be good to ask a question. Do you really need the redeeming love of Christ in your life? Has Jesus turned your life around? Has he loved you into life?

There is a beautiful old story about Zaccheus, the tax collector. It tells how, in later years, he rose early every morning and left his house. His wife, curious, followed him one morning. At the town well he filled a bucket and he walked until he came to the sycamore tree. There, setting down the bucket, he began to clean away the stones, the branches, and the rubbish from around the base of the tree. Having done that, he poured water on the roots and stood there in silence, gently caressing the trunk with both of his hands. When his amazed wife came out of hiding and asked what he was doing, Zaccheus simply said, “This is where I found Christ!”

I can imagine that for the rest of their lives, the woman who touched the hem of Jesus’ robe that day on the street and the daughter of Jairus who was raised up in that room in her home, continually brought people back to those sacred spots and said, “This is where I found Christ! This is where Christ loved me into life!”

Do you have a sacred spot like that? This is the good news of our Catholic faith. The love of God, reaching out to us in Christ, has the power to heal and the power to redeem.

