



“But taking her by the hand he called, saying, “Child, arise.” And her spirit returned, and she got up at once ...”

There is a movement in today’s gospel that we cannot see. We can only receive it through faith. It is the movement of the power that goes out of Jesus to heal the woman who touched the fringe of his garments. Only Jesus is aware of this, however he does not know exactly what happened and he looks for answers. And then, there is the movement of the spirit. The spirit of the young daughter of Jair who returns to her body.

The “unseen movements” are at the center of the gospel today because both bring about healing and new life, restoration and resurrection. They bring about a new creation, as the Holy apostle Paul says in today’s epistle. Within this new creation, we hear the voice of Christ: “Peter, do you love me more than these?” (today’s gospel at Matins).

“...and touched the fringe of his garment...” ... “Who touched me?”

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

*It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard: **that went down to the fringe of his garments.***

As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.” (Ps 133)

There are illnesses, both physical and spiritual, that need to be contained, so that they may not spread. Just last week, Dr Coelho was talking about MAID being contagious. The more people are exposed to these threats, the more vulnerable they become. Some of these viruses might look like a cold, others could be lethal. Euthanasia is lethal, especially when we do not have the immune system built for that. Some of the restrictions in the old law might have been the result of this necessity or common wisdom. Today, within the community, our actions are sometimes guided by this common sense, when trying to discern how to welcome people who carry different illnesses, and how to reduce the spread. We need to discern how we can get better when we realize how sick we are. We need to pray for the forgiveness of our sins and ask for mercy, so that we may be reintegrated within the community. That’s why we want to be made well.

L. came to our community a couple of weeks ago. It was cold and he was wearing only a pair of shorts. He could hardly speak. It was hard to understand what he was really looking for. His eyes seemed lost, like many other eyes we've seen within the community, expressing a segregation of the soul, which he had recently experienced in his life. We could see a desire to connect, while having a fear of communion. We've met before people from the streets who want to reconnect, to be reintegrated within the communal life. The desire is real and honest as are the reasons for which they cannot. There are ways to make this happen: through prayer, by coming more often for coffee and taking time to talk and be listened to, by volunteering within the community or eventually working with George at the bakery, learning to bake...and so on. And people try and sometimes they follow through. But most of the time there are no magic results. We do see miracles sometimes; we still are waiting to see a change in us, however, it takes time for such a change to happen. And time is good. Because it teaches us the art of toil and renders humility to the soul.

That's what we thought will happen with L. when he said he wanted to volunteer with us, after spending a few moments in the chapel. We assumed it would take a lot of time for change to happen in him. His eyes were still watching us from very far. However, despite our common wisdom, he spent most of his time around the community from early morning. It felt as if he touched the grace in the chapel where he sneaked a couple of times to pray. It was the prayer for communion of the soul which was segregated on the bottom of hell. The one who failed out of communion and yet had the faith to pray for it, and to hope to be reintegrated. The one who lives at the margins is touching the fringe of the church at night, sleeping in the back yard, asking to be healed despite the fear of communion and the sense of segregation he is experiencing. The short time he spent at the mission, working during the day, was nothing short of a miracle. We pray that this will last longer than other miracles we've seen before and that it would take less time than the repentance of our own soul.

The grace is flowing through Jesus' garments since he heard at his baptism: "this is my beloved Son." It is the grace of Christ which, through the cross, is watering all creation making it all anew. The cross that builds the community is being planted at its very center. The woman broke many restrictions when she approached Jesus. She approached him on a promise not on a reality of her life. The prayer of the one who is marginalized and segregated away from community meets the flow of grace that moves the whole creation towards unity. The flow of grace does not happen through magic, but through the prayer and the touch of the one who asks for communion, while being utterly marginalized. It breaks rules and barriers. Because, while being on the bottom of hell, it opens itself to grace, becoming a chosen vessel, being filled up by it.

"Do not weep; for she is not dead but sleeping."

M. reconnected with the mission more this year. He used to come before the pandemic, but he stopped. This week, he spoke again at the table about his coma, his clinical death, that he experienced after his appendix burst. "I was on the table and I remember the doctor saying: *Let's try one more time ...* I remember him saying that. You know, I saw Jesus then. His face was all radiant. Yes, I saw him. It was light. It was white. I told other people you know. It was very good. Beautiful."

"Why did you come back? " I don't know ... I asked, I think ... I was confused ... and I did not know where I was ... it was beautiful."

He shows pictures he took at the time, lying in his hospital bed after he recovered, as a proof of his experience. He still keeps those photos in his phone.

"Nicolaie," he said as our conversation was coming to an end "... don't forget about mama Mary."

"Who ... ?" "Mama Mary, the mother of Jesus. We love her very much. Don't forget about her. We pray to her." M. is from Turkey. He seems to be Kurdish. He is not Christian and yet he says he saw Jesus and he loves mama Mary. And one cannot argue with him about that.

At times we hear confessions at the mission. All kinds of confessions and words of visions. Sometimes true, sometimes people's interpretations of extreme life experiences. We cannot always discern them, nor do we always want to. Rather, we receive the peace that comes from the soul of one who bears witness to goodness and beauty, whether in life or on the bed of pain. Sometimes it is better not to answer their questions. However, the gospel does speak today about a returning of the soul into Jairus's daughter. A movement similar to the power that came out of Jesus' body. We do not hear this often in the gospel.

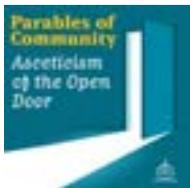
We hear more often about Jesus giving up the spirit into the hands of the Father. Why would the soul return from the bosom of Abraham, from the embrace of the Father? What would make it turn back from the love that created it? *"In me there is left no spark of desire for mundane things, but only a murmur of living water that whispers within me, "Come to the Father"* (St Ignatius of Antioch). Why would it return?

Death is the ultimate violence done to man (as Father has often said). The separation of the soul from its body is violence done to the soul, to the whole creation and to God. It is contrary to the movement towards unity and communion of the Holy Spirit. Who would have known that the segregation of the poor man in this life is going to be mirrored by an even greater one: the segregation of the soul from its own body? Maybe that's why Lazarus was carried into heaven. Because he experienced extreme marginalization in his life, the Father spared him

from the violent segregation of the soul and body. He was carried by the angels in the bosom of Abraham.

It was enough for him to have endured the violence of life already.

The segregation of man outside of community is a form of violence that resembles death itself. Because the poor man experiences profound marginalization. In contrast, love for the neighbour and kindness for the human being overcomes the violence in us and weakens the power of death in humanity. The spirit of the young daughter returned to the body without postponing the love of the Father and his embrace. Because it was his Son who touched her. The one who loves the poor man was not waiting for her in heaven but rather was touching her lifeless body speaking kindly to her. The love in heaven was equally present on earth, incarnate in the Son of Man. Through his touch, the young daughter of Jairus was resurrected. The renewal of family life is a prefiguration of the kingdom of heaven, where all, we pray and hope, will be reconciled with each other. It is a sign of the time that is coming, and that has already begun: a time when the soul will no longer have to leave the body in order to surrender to the love of the Father, because that love will be reflected on earth in every human being. Then the Father will once again return among His people and there will be no segregation between heaven and earth. We pray for this because we remember having seen it already. At times, right here, in the heart of the community. In the heart of the poor man who does not want to die alone.



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St Silouan Chapel at St John's Mission

155 Broadview Ave. Toronto, ON M4M 2E9

T: 416-466-1357 E: info@stjohnsmission.org W: stjohnsmission.org

St Zoticos Orthodox Church at Good Neighbours Mission

193 Markham Rd Scarborough, ON M1J 3C3

T: 647-358-4105



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