

# The Thirteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time

(Year B)

<i>First Reading</i>	Wisdom 1:13-15; 2:23-24
<i>Response</i>	I will praise you, Lord, for you have rescued me.
<i>Psalm</i>	Psalm 30:2, 4, 5-6, 11, 12, 13
<i>Second Reading</i>	2 Corinthians 8:7, 9, 13-15
<i>Gospel Acclamation</i>	Our Savior Jesus Christ destroyed death and brought life to light through the Gospel.
<i>Gospel</i>	Mark 5:21-43

Today is the Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time for year B, and this year the church continues the journey through the Gospel of Mark in order by focusing on a very important healing of Jesus, and that's the healing — it's kind of a double healing — of the woman with a hemorrhage and the raising of Ja'irus' daughter. So these can both be found in Mark 5, so we're going to look at that reading for the gospel today with the focus on the theme of Jesus the healer, and look at how he comes to save us and deliver us not just from suffering, but also from death itself. Before we actually read the gospel I just want to make one important literary observation. You'll notice that what Mark is giving us here is a story inside another story. So he begins with the raising of Ja'irus' daughter, he then switches to the woman with a hemorrhage, and then he finishes with the account of what actually happened to the daughter of Ja'irus. Scholars have come up with the somewhat infelicitous expression, the "Markan Sandwich," because he's sandwiching one story between two others, or inserting one story into the middle of another frame, and it's just something to keep an eye on; it's something that's kind of distinctive of Mark's gospel. And, in this case, it is an interesting juxtaposition, an interesting insertion, because in both cases the suffering that's involved is linked to the number 12. So as we're going to see, the little girl is 12 years old and the woman who has had the hemorrhage has had it for 12 years, and that might be one of the reasons Mark juxtaposes these two — in addition to the fact that they happen at the same time. One miracle happens on the way to the performance of another

miracle. So just with that literary observation of the Markan Sandwich in mind, let's read the gospel for today:

And when Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered about him; and he was beside the sea. Then came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Ja'irus by name; and seeing him, he fell at his feet, and besought him, saying, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live." And he went with him.

And a great crowd followed him and thronged about him. And there was a woman who had had a flow of blood for twelve years, and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse. She had heard the reports about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment. For she said, "If I touch even his garments, I shall be made well." And immediately the hemorrhage ceased; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. And Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone forth from him, immediately turned about in the crowd, and said, "Who touched my garments?" And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing around you, and yet you say, `Who touched me?'" And he looked around to see who had done it. But the woman, knowing what had been done to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

While he was still speaking, there came from the ruler's house some who said, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?" But ignoring what they said, Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe." And he allowed no one to follow him except Peter and James and John the brother of James. When they came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, he saw a tumult, and people weeping and wailing loudly. And when he had entered, he said to them, "Why do you make a tumult and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping." And they laughed at him. But he put them all outside, and took the child's father and mother

and those who were with him, and went in where the child was. Taking her by the hand he said to her, "Tal'itha cu'mi"; which means, "Little girl, I say to you, arise." And immediately the girl got up and walked (she was twelve years of age), and they were immediately overcome with amazement. And he strictly charged them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.<sup>1</sup>

Wow, what a dramatic story. This is a great example of how although Mark's gospel has fewer stories in it, it has fewer accounts of miracles done by Jesus than Matthew or Luke, they're longer gospels, right. When Mark gives you an account of a miracle of Jesus he frequently gives the most detail. So he has fewer episodes but longer and more detailed accounts of the miracles, and we see that here with the two-fold miracle of the raising of Ja'irus' daughter and the healing of the woman with a hemorrhage. If you compare these accounts to Matthew and Luke's, theirs are shorter, they're more brief, they're less detailed, Mark has a lot more detail. So let's go through them together because there is a lot going on in these two episodes.

First, let's look at the beginning of the sandwich here, the beginning of the account of Ja'irus' daughter here. So what we see here is that Ja'irus is a ruler of a synagogue. So what's a ruler of the synagogue? Well a synagogue in the First Century A.D. was a gathering place for prayer and the reading of the Scripture. That's literally what synagogue means, a place where people are gathered together, an assembly house so to speak; and they were frequently funded by wealthy Jewish individuals who would be elite members of society, you know esteemed members of society I should say, who would fund the synagogue and the synagogues would sometimes be in their own houses, like in the courtyard of a house. So these people would sometimes be called the ruler of the synagogue or the leader of the synagogue and they were men of prominence. So in this case Ja'irus is the ruler of the synagogue, he's a very prominent man and would have been well respected in the community. But, he has a problem; he has a daughter who is very ill, who's terminally ill, who is on the point of death. So he comes to Jesus and when he sees

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all Bible citations/quotations herein are from *The Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*. New York: National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, 1994.

him, notice, despite his status in the community, what does he do before Jesus? He expresses humility by falling at Jesus' feet and says, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so she may be made well, and live." So both humility and faith are expressed by this father in the face of the imminent death of his daughter, right. He's desperate. He's experiencing what every parent dreads which is the illness and potential death of a child. It's really common these days for people to recognize that lots of bad things can happen to us in our life, lots of tragedies, but one of the worst is the death of a child, right. It's just something that I can say as a parent, personally, I can't even really fathom losing one of my children, and to have a child who's sick and suffering is a very heavy cross to carry. So this leader of the community who would be well-respected, probably is very wealthy, he has this heavy cross of having a sick child, a child who is on the point of death. And so he's desperate, he falls before Jesus, he begs Jesus, "Come lay your hands on her that she may be made well."

So Jesus begins to come to his house, and on the way another miracle takes place. A woman who has a hemorrhage, a flow of blood, for 12 years also tries to touch Jesus so that she can be healed. This woman with a hemorrhage is an interesting case because although Mark does not tell us exactly what is the nature of her malady, like what kind of flow of blood is she having, what is clear is that if she would've had a perpetual flow of blood, some kind of hemorrhaging for that long a period of time, it would've rendered her in the First Century A.D. under the Law of Moses ritually impure. In other words, she would not have been able to go into the temple to worship God; it would've excluded her from ritual worship. We know this because in the Old Testament, like the Book of Leviticus 15 for example, it tells us that any woman who has a flow of blood, whether it would be a monthly flow of blood due to menstruation or some other kind of malady, or in fact any man who had it, if he had leprosy for example and he had open sores that were constantly bleeding, it would render them impure so that they couldn't bring their bodies, they couldn't bring themselves, into the presence of God in order to worship Him. Now I could do a whole video just on why that was the case, it would take a little while to walk through that in the Book of Leviticus, but the basic principle behind it is, if you look at the Old Testament, any manifestation of death or decay or a loss of life, whether it be the loss of blood or the loss of seed, loss of semen, or the loss of blood associated with a pregnancy, a childbirth, all

those things would render a person unable to enter into God's presence because you couldn't bring human death, human decay, like leprosy into the presence of God in the tabernacle; there was a ritual separation of those things. So this would have meant not just a lot of physical suffering for this woman but also spiritual suffering, right, social isolation, cultic or liturgical isolation from the worshipping community of God. This would have been a heavy burden to carry and it says she's done everything she can to try to seek healing. It says that she had suffered much under many physicians, spent all she had, and was not better but rather grew worse. And no offense to the doctors out there, but this is something that can happen with people. If they're in an illness that can't be explained or can't be healed, they can spend all their money trying to find a cure and yet sometimes the cures are worse than the disease; sometimes medicines have side effects that can be debilitating in themselves and this was certainly the case in the First Century A.D. with primitive medicine and whatnot. So this woman has not just suffered from her illness, she's also suffered at the hands of the doctors, and she's just getting worse and worse and worse.

So what we have here is another situation of desperation. Ja'irus is desperate for the healing of his daughter, this woman is desperate to be healed and in the context of that desperation and the long suffering, what does she do? She's heard about Jesus and she believes that if she can just get up to him and just touch his garments she'll be made well. Now what does this express? Once again it expresses her faith and I think it's pretty remarkable here that she doesn't even think that Jesus has to say anything. She believes that he is so holy, that his holiness itself is, in a sense, contagious, that if she can just touch his clothing she will be made well. Now what's interesting about that is it's almost like the inverse of the idea of her own ritual impurity because if you go back once again to the Book of Leviticus, one of the things it says there is that if a person is suffering from some kind of impurity, whether it be leprosy or the impurity of a corpse, that those things were in some kind of sense spiritually communicable. So if you were well and you touched a person with leprosy, you too would be excluded from the temple, or if you touched a corpse, a dead body, you would have to wait for a time and wash before you could go back into God's presence in the temple. And it wasn't a moral impurity, it wasn't seen like a sin for which you were culpable, but it was a kind of ritual impurity due to contact with decay, sickness, suffering and death. In any case,

what's fascinating here is that she does not think that Jesus will be made impure by her touching him, rather that she will be made pure, that she will be healed by even just touching his garment. And so sure enough when she does touch his garment it says the hemorrhage immediately ceased and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. Now just as a side note, that's one of Mark's favorite words, "immediately." Over and over again we see throughout the gospel immediately Jesus did this, immediately he did that; it's meant to kind of signify the power of Jesus, that it's an instantaneous healing and that's what happens here. Twelve years she's been trying to get healed and simply touching Jesus makes it happen in a moment of time.

Now what's fascinating about the next verse, though, is that it says Jesus perceived in himself that power had gone forth from him, and so he turns around to the crowd and says, "Who touched my garments?" Now you can see the disciples are a little put off by this question because it almost seems absurd because Mark has just told you that the crowd is pressing among him. He's being basically, you know, mobbed by the people of the town. So the answer of the question is everyone touched you, what are you talking about Jesus? Everyone is touching you simultaneously but not everyone is being healed. And, that's kind of a really important insight into the healing of the woman with the hemorrhage. What's different about her? What distinguishes her from the rest of the crowd? It's not just that she touches Christ, they're all touching him. What's different is that she touches him with faith, that she touches him with a supernatural trust, that if she merely touched the cloak of his garment, the hem of his garment, she's going to be made well. And so the disciples of course say, well look you see the crowds pressing in on you, why do you ask who touched me? And he looks around to see who did it but the woman, and this is fascinating look at what it says there, "knowing what had been done to her." Notice, we think of her as doing something to Jesus, she's the one touching Jesus but she recognizes that what actually just happened is that Jesus touched her. The power flowed from him into her and had healed her body so she comes in fear and trembling and she does the same thing Ja'irus does, she falls down before him. So faith and humility, those are the two aspects that kind of parallel the woman and the man in this story: Ja'irus and then the woman with a hemorrhage. So she falls down before him and tells him the

whole truth and then he says to her, and this is fascinating, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.”

Now I just caught this as I was reading it, here is the other parallel: Ja’irus has a daughter who's 12 years old, right, who has been sick and suffering, right. So does Jesus, right. This isn't just a woman with a hemorrhage. In so far as Jesus is God made man, he can legitimately address this women, who may be older than him, as his daughter, right, because that's who she is in his eyes. He’s not immune from her suffering. He's not aloof to her suffering. He relates to her as to a child and says, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.” So it's beautiful parallels going on here between these two stories and I don't think they're just at the literary level; I think that this is happening at the historical level, that these two miracles are juxtaposed by God in the history of salvation because they're meant to mutually illuminate one another. And then Mark picks up on that in his account of the events and he highlights, he's bringing out these parallels so that we can see them in light of one another as well, right.

Now with that said it then moves on to, it picks up again I should say, with the account of the healing of Ja’irus’ daughter. And this is that Markan Sandwich, it moves back to the initial frame of that story and it says that while he was still speaking there came from the ruler's house some who said your daughter is dead, you know, don't trouble the teacher any further. But Jesus ignores them and he says, “Don't fear, only believe.” So there's that emphasis on faith again. The woman's faith has made her well, now he's calling for the people to have faith so that Ja’irus’ daughter can be made well. And he takes with him into the house, this is something that's distinctive of Mark's gospel, he tells you that he takes Peter, James and John, this inner circle of Jesus, who are the ones he picks to go up the mountain for the Transfiguration. They're also the ones he takes to the mountain of Gethsemane. And I think the fact that he selects them shows this is a significant miracle. Jesus thinks there is something special about this miracle and he takes them into the room in order to heal them. And then he says something a little weird, and I think has troubled and confused a lot of people because he says, you know, “Why do you make a tumult and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping.” So this is a little puzzling because it raises the question, is the girl actually dead, is this a miracle of death and resurrection or is she just asleep, right? And it's not

clear, Mark doesn't answer that explicitly, we kind of have to try to infer from the text. My personal reading on the text is that the child has in fact died but that Jesus has already responded to Ja'irus' faith and humility at the beginning by bringing her back to life. What he's now going to do is go in and raise her from sleep precisely because the miracle of the raising of Ja'irus' daughter isn't just a miraculous healing of a particular child at a particular place, in a particular village in the First Century A.D., it's a sign, it's meant to point beyond itself to what Jesus will do with every one of us in the resurrection of the dead. And I think you can kind of see that when you look, when he goes to the child and says to her, "Tal'itha cu'mi." That's an Aramaic expression. *Tal'itha* means "little girl" and then *cu'mi* in Aramaic literally means "arise, get up, stand up." *Qum* is the Hebrew there, the Hebrew version of the same thing. *Tal'itha cu'mi*, little girl, I say to you, arise and she got up and she walked and she was 12 years old.

So in this sense the raising of Ja'irus' daughter from sleep is a kind of anticipation of our final resurrection from the dead because in Jewish culture and in the New Testament, you probably know this if you've read it through, death is ordinarily referred to as going to sleep, as being asleep, right. Paul talks about this in his letters, you know:

We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed...

That's in 1 Corinthians 15. What he means is we will not all die, right, but we'll all be changed. In 1 Thessalonians 4, Paul is writing to the Thessalonians and they said some of them are distressed because their brothers and sisters have fallen asleep, meaning that they died. Revelation talks about blessed are those who fall asleep in the Lord, meaning those who've died in the Lord. Ancients always saw an analogy between sleep and death, right. That sleep, in a sense, was like a — this is my words not theirs — but it's like a little sacrament of death, right. At the end of each day we succumb to our weakness, we have to close her eyes, we have to lay down and sleep and in the morning we rise again, right, to begin a new day. So it's like a little anticipation of what awaits us at the evening of our life, at the end of our life. So, you know, we will talk about death through euphemisms. We'll talk about someone passing away, which is a euphemism, it's a metaphor from like a journey, like they've gone from this place to another place. Another metaphor



would be they've fallen asleep, which puts the emphasis on the immobility of the body, right, on the weakness of the flesh and then rising again, the resurrection, draws on that motif, right, that we stand up again when we're brought to new life. So Jesus' raising of the little girl in this gospel, Mark, in a sense it kind of parallels the resurrection of Lazarus in the Gospel of John, which is also a sign that points forward to the ultimate miracle and the ultimate healing which is the healing of death itself, the triumph over death itself which Jesus is going to bring through his resurrection.

And then finally there you'll notice evidently being dead is something that makes you hungry because Jesus is concerned with the little girl's needs. He says, you know, give her something to eat. And I think that's just a kind of neat little witness to the humanity of this miracle here, that he tells them to give her some sustenance after being raised from the dead, and puts that emphasis too on the 12 years. Mark emphasizes that 12 years and brings this, a better term than sandwich is an *inclusio*, a literary *inclusio* where one story is included in a frame there to its close. Beautiful story, beautiful miracle and a powerful scene from the Gospel of Mark.

Okay, so that's the gospel for today. What's the significance for us and how does it link with the Old Testament reading? Well in this case, it's really fascinating, the Old Testament reading that was chosen for the day, it's from the Book of Wisdom in the Old Testament. And it's a remarkable passage, very countercultural passage, it's about the origins of death. Now if you haven't read the Wisdom of Solomon in the Old Testament, this is one of those books that is only in the Catholic Old Testament. It's not in the Protestant Old Testament and it is also not in the Jewish Hebrew Bible. It's a book that's preserved for us only in Greek, we don't have any Hebrew copies of it, and it's one of the wisdom books of the Old Testament. And this is one of my favorite books in the Old Testament, I really love the Wisdom of Solomon. It begins by recounting the creation of human beings and the origins of sin and death. So it's kind of retelling the story of the fall of Adam and Eve in the Book of Genesis, but it's highlighting a very important point. You could say that the main theme of this first reading for the day is that God did not make death, that God is not the origin of death but that human beings are the ones who, through our sin, bring death into the world and make death a part of human existence. So let's

just read the Scripture for today and I'll try to unpack it. In Wisdom 1:13 it says this:

Because God did not make death, and he does not delight in the death of the living. For he created all things that they might exist, and the generative forces of the world are wholesome, and there is no destructive poison in them; and the dominion of Hades is not on earth. For righteousness is immortal.

And then it skips a number of verses and it takes another passage from chapter 2 with the same theme. It says this:

For God created man for incorruption, and made him in the image of his own eternity, but through the devil's envy death entered the world, and those who belong to his party experience it.

So they're basically four points being made here that are crucial. Number one, that God is not the origin of death, that's the first point. God did not make death, it is not something he created. When he creates the world he creates it so that things might have life, so that they might exist. That's the first point, the origin of death lies not with Him. Second point, creation, that God is the author of the universe and that his will, his original will for created things, is that they might exist, right. Not that they might die and be corrupt but that they might exist. He creates the world so that it might actually be and Wisdom says that the dominion of Hades is not of Earth but righteousness is immortal. In other words, righteousness, which is a virtue, it's a characteristic that comes from God, is something that's ordered toward immortality; it's ordered toward life; it's ordered toward not just any kind of life, not just a temporary life, but a life that goes on forever and ever. The Greek word for immortality here is *athanasía*. It literally means no death or deathlessness, right, that's what immortality is about. So what it's saying here is that when God makes human beings, even though we're finite creatures, the reason he made us is so that we might live for ever. And I think human experience bares this out, right. You look around and people want to live forever. No one wants to die. We have this innate desire to avoid death and to live forever. Where's that from? The Wisdom of Solomon is telling us that that's something God made us

with, that's something God implanted in us that goes back to our original creation being ordered toward immortality. And so if that's the case then the question of course arises, well wait, where then is death from? And then the last point, the fourth point it's making here is again very countercultural. If you ask a secular person with a secular worldview, what is the origin of death? They would say well death is natural, death is just part of the natural order, and therefore if you believe that God is the author of nature than therefore God is the author of death as well. So in other words, we have God to blame for the death that's in the world.

The Wisdom of Solomon, following the Jewish Scriptures, says something very different. No no no, fourth point, it's through the devil's envy that death entered the world, and those who belong to his party experience it. That's a direct allusion to Genesis 2-3, the account of the fall of Adam of Eve, that it's through the devil's envy — which is interesting — that's what's motivating him, he envies the fact that Adam and Eve are created in the image of God's eternity, in the image and likeness of God; he wants to take that away from them. And so through his envy he tempts them to commit a sin that brings upon them not just the state of sin, but also ultimately the punishment of death, the effect of death. Genesis 3 of course, after Adam eats God says, “you are dust and to dust you shall return,” and then he drives them out of the garden in Genesis 3, lest they eat of the fruit of the tree of life and “live forever.” In other words, he denies them access to that which would give them immortality in this state of separation from him that they find themselves in after the fall.

So in other words, this is an account of the origin of death. And I think this is really, really important for us to stress precisely because it's not natural, no pun intended, for us to look at things that way living in a modern or post-modern secular worldview. Like we've all been brought up in this post-modern secular context, or in a modern context, in which the world, the secular world, does not view death through this lens. If you have secular people who believe that maybe God made the world, maybe they're kind of looking at the world from a deistic perspective, then according to that point of view it's pretty common that people just assume that death is something God wrote into the created order. We tend to ignore the account of the origin of death in Sacred Scripture in the Old Testament, but the church in the readings for today is juxtaposing this account in the gospel of suffering, the suffering of the women with the hemorrhage and death, the death of

Ja'irus' daughter, with this Old Testament reading that's telling us death is not God's fault. At the end of the day it's not His fault, it's the fault of the devil, Satan, the enemy of God, the angel of God, and of human beings who fell to that temptation and through their actions brought sin and death into the world.

And so because of that situation we need a savior, we need someone to rescue us. We don't have the power to rescue ourselves from suffering and death. It doesn't matter who you are, doesn't matter how rich you are, doesn't matter how famous you are, at the end of the day you are going to suffer and eventually you're going to die, right, because that's the lot we find ourselves in in the human state. And so the Psalm for today is actually a Psalm about that, it's about the hope for deliverance from death. So Psalm 30, one of my favorites Psalms, a beautiful Psalm, says this:

I will extol thee, O LORD, for thou hast drawn me up,  
and hast not let my foes rejoice over me.  
O LORD my God, I cried to thee for help,  
and thou hast healed me.  
O LORD, thou hast brought up my soul from Sheol,  
restored me to life from among those gone down to the Pit.

So those are the first couple of verses. Notice there God is a divine healer, so we cry to God for healing. He's also a savior because the psalmist says, "you've delivered my soul from Sheol and from the pit." Sheol in the Old Testament is the Hebrew name for the realm of the dead. The pit is another name for the realm of the dead where we go after we die. And then again if you look down at the next verse it says:

Sing praises to the LORD, O you his saints,  
and give thanks to his holy name.  
For his anger is but for a moment,  
and his favor is for a lifetime.  
Weeping may tarry for the night,  
but joy comes with the morning.

It's a very famous line there from the Psalm, again that it's applied to the resurrection, right. Sin, suffering and death are like the darkness of the night. Resurrection is like the joy of the morning, and although the night is long and difficult and we might weep through the night, joy comes with the morning. So joy comes with our resurrection from the dead, our waking from sleep in essence. That's how the Psalm is being interpreted, that's how it works functioning as a bridge between the story of sin and death entering into the world in Wisdom, the hope for the resurrection in the Psalm, and then the coming of the deliverer, of the Savior, the healer, Jesus the healer, Jesus the Savior in the story of the account of Ja'irus' daughter and woman with the hemorrhage.

With that I'd like to just close by pointing to two important passages in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. I think this is really important to emphasize that, in this case I'm not just giving like my opinion about the passages in question, I'm actually reflecting the church's teaching here about the origin of sin and death. In my experience as a teacher over the last 13 years, I've noticed that many Catholics frequently just kind of pick up on the secular world view of the idea that death is natural. And in a sense that's true, it's part of our common state, it's part of our natural state everyone experiences it in the natural world, but in another sense, it's unnatural, in so far as God didn't create us to die but he created us to live forever. And so there's an important passage in the Catechism, there's a section in the Catechism, paragraph 1006 and following, which actually treats the whole question of death. I think it's a beautiful section, I encourage you to read it. But one paragraph in particular stands out. It's paragraph 1008 and it says this, in all italics:

*Death is a consequence of sin.*

I'll say that again.

*Death is a consequence of sin.* The Church's Magisterium, as authentic interpreter of the affirmations of Scripture and Tradition, teaches that death entered the world on account of man's sin. Even though man's nature is mortal, God had destined him not to die. Death was therefore contrary to the plans of God the Creator and entered the world as a consequence of

sin. “Bodily death, from which man would have been immune had he not sinned” is thus “the last enemy” of man left to be conquered.<sup>2</sup>

So there’s a lot going on in that passage but I’m just going to highlight a few points here. First, the church is saying here that as the authentic interpreter of Scripture and Tradition, it’s very clear that death enters the world after man enters the world. It’s something that is brought about because of our sin, that’s the first point. Second, although our nature is mortal — in other words, we don’t have immortal nature like God, God is immortal in and of himself — although our nature is mortal, it breaks down on its own, so to speak, God, through his grace, had destined us not to die, as Wisdom said in the first reading. God created man for immortality. So through God’s grace our first parents were destined to live forever, right, and death was therefore contrary to God’s plans. So why does it come into the world? It comes into the world, number three, as a consequence of sin, and the Catechism here is quoting Vatican II when it says that man would’ve been immune from bodily death if he had not sinned. And that’s why death becomes the last enemy to be conquered by Christ.

Very important, the church has a whole section in the Catechism on the state called original holiness. This is what the church teaches human life was like for our first parents, Adam and Eve, before the fall. And it’s fascinating whenever I tend to teach this section in Genesis and I ask students to define original holiness, they’ll frequently point, you know, man is in harmony with God, he’s in harmony with his neighbor, he’s in harmony with creation, but they tend to leave out, which to me is the most striking feature of original holiness, and it’s that man is immortal, that he is immune from bodily death, which is, I kind of think, pretty remarkable. This is something that the church is making a really astounding claim, that God creates the first human beings immortal, and that it’s only through their sin that they become subject to death, that death enters into the world. And that’s why we need a savior who can come to save us from death, that’s why death is the last enemy to be conquered, the Catechism is saying here. And that’s what Christ comes to do, he comes to save us not just from sin, but from death itself, and he’s going to do that through the resurrection of the dead.

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<sup>2</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church 1008, cf. 400

And until such time as we are raised from the dead, until that final resurrection, what he then gives to us is the power of the resurrection through the church and especially through the sacraments. And so there's one last quote from the Catechism, this is from paragraph — I picked it up but I should have left it out — 1504, where the church takes the image of the woman with a hemorrhage and it says this. What about suffering now, like what about what I'm dealing with right now? Resurrection kind of seems far off, the Catechism says:

Often Jesus asks the sick to believe... The sick try to touch him, “for power came forth from him and healed them all.” And so in the sacraments Christ continues to “touch” us in order to heal us.<sup>3</sup>

So in a very real sense every one of us can see ourselves both in Ja'irus' daughter who was dead but then rises again because we're all going to die and we're all going to rise again in Christ, God willing for eternal life with him. And then we also are all going to suffer. So in the midst of our suffering, like the women with the hemorrhage, Christ is not absent but he now touches us above all through the sacraments of the church: baptism, through the holy Eucharist, through the sacrament of reconciliation, especially in this case through the anointing of the sick, which is a sacrament actually designed, right, to communicate grace to those who are sick and suffering, and especially those are on the verge of death. So Christ has not left us, he has not abandoned us, he was Jesus the healer, he was Jesus the physician then and he still is Jesus the healer today. Healing us now through the sacraments, through the grace of the sacraments, and then ultimately healing us from the ultimate illness of death itself through the resurrection.

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<sup>3</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church 1504