

Friday (St. Teresa of Avila)

O Son of God, how is it that you can give us so much with your first word, 'Our Father'? Besides humbling yourself by joining your petitions to ours and making yourself our brother, you give us in your Father's name all that can be given, since you ask us him to make us his children, and your word cannot fail. Since he is our Father, he must bear with us however deeply we offend him, if like the prodigal son we return to him. He must pardon us, console us in our trials; maintain us in a way that becomes him who must needs be a better Father than an earthly parent. More than this, he makes us brothers and sisters, co-heirs with you. Behold, Lord, with your love and your humility, nothing can be an obstacle to you.

Scripture (Colossians 1:13-16,18-19)

It is he who has rescued us from the ruling force of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of the Son that he loves, and in him we enjoy our freedom, the forgiveness of sin. He is the image of the unseen God, the first born of all creation. For in him were created all things in heaven and on earth. He is the Beginning, the first born from the dead, so that he should be supreme in every way; because God wanted all fullness to be found in him.

13th Week of Ordinary Time

Saved from mediocrity

Listening to the Cure of the Woman with a Haemorrhage and the Raising of Jairus' Daughter, Mark makes clear that Jesus has divine power, (both are beyond human help: the little girl is dead and the woman has spent all she has had on doctors, but her condition was getting worse). It's comforting that his compassion means he will help people in desperate situations, but there is always more to Jesus' miracles than him 'being kind and helpful'. He constantly tells people to keep quiet about their cures, and in chapter 1 he puts proclaiming the Kingdom above performing more miracles.

One feature both have in common is that they would be considered as being outside the Law and therefore cut off from God – the little girls being dead and the woman being unclean. According to the Law, as laid down in Leviticus, Jesus made himself unclean by touching the dead body and the woman made him unclean by touching him. Jesus' actions are clearly divine power – at the moment Jesus felt the power go out of him, she knew she had been cured. No wonder she came forward in fear and trembling, (not so much because of her 'wrong act', but 'because she knew what had happened to her', exactly like the apostles' awe when Jesus calmed the storm.)

Her faith had not only made her physically well, but had also shown that she was not 'unclean' as far as God is concerned.

Jairus' faith had to be more sustained. When he hears that his daughter has died he could have wavered and 'not put the Master to any further trouble', but he trusted Jesus' 'have faith', even when Jesus argued with the mourners and then threw them out, no doubt putting him on the spot with 'are you going to let him throw your family and friends out?'

The Greek words used for healing and curing in these miracles point us to the importance of this faith in Jesus for all people. They are the words the early Christians used for the new life in the resurrection, for being saved. Their faith was such that they trusted in Jesus completely – not that he would save their lives, (many of them died in the persecution), but that they would allow themselves to be led completely by the Spirit.

This is the fullness of life which the Book of Wisdom speaks of, (Wisdom 1). Death (separation from God – physical death is a consequence of this), was not what he intended: there was no element of evil or death in anything he created—the whole business of 'Original Sin' is an attempt to describe how disharmony and disorder are from the choices we make when we 'go it alone', but it does not take away for one instant the belief that we are created, and remain, creatures who are in God's image and likeness. The Book of Wisdom begins with an exhortation to 'love justice', to live according to God's will and trust in God. This is what we pray when we say, 'Thy Kingdom come.' Mark has put these cures after showing Jesus' power over evil and over nature – both signs that in him, the Kingdom has arrived. The cures demonstrate that the Kingdom has come to save people, to allow them to live fully in union with God.

This is the faith, the trusting all to God, which Jairus and the woman had when they had no other choice. My difficulty is that it is easier to want my agenda, to build my security. Where sin cuts me off from what God has to offer, Faith allows me to be led to something bigger, to be saved from this limited life, and to live the life God intended: to be immortal, to share his divinity. (Wis. 2:23). Martin Bennett

Monday (Fr. Richard Rohr)

You are created us in the image of God from the very beginning. So many of us carry a kind of unspoken assumption that something is very, very wrong with us, that we're damaged, guilty, and unlovable. Stepping into our divinity—acknowledging and accepting our fundamental nobility—is the ultimate paradigm shift. Searching for and rediscovering the True Self is the essential task that will gradually open us to receiving and giving love to God, others, and ourselves, and thus to live truly just lives.

St. Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335-c. 394) offered a beautiful, succinct, and useful definition of sin. *Sin*, he suggested, *is a refusal to keep growing*. Jesus revealed and accepted a paradox: human and divine are not separate, but one! For most of us, this seems just too good and too dangerous to be true. There is so much contrary evidence!

Scripture (Wisdom 1:13-15;2:23-24)

Death was not God's doing, he takes no pleasure in destroying the living. To exist—for this he created all things. The creatures of the world have health in them, in them is no fatal poison, and Hades has no power over the world, for uprightness is immortal. For God created human beings to be immortal, he made them as an image of his own nature. Death came into the world through the Devil's envy, as those who belong to him find to their cost.

Tuesday (Dietrich Bonhoeffer)

With the loss of the God-like nature God had given him, man had forfeited the destiny of his being, which was to be like God. Since that day, the sons of Adam in their pride have striven to recover the divine image by their own efforts. The divine image, which God in his grace had given to man is lost. But God does not neglect his lost creature. He plans to recreate his image in man, to recover his first delight in his handiwork. The image of God has entered our midst, in the form of our fallen life. In the teachings and acts of Christ, in his life and death, the image of God is revealed. In him, the divine image has been recreated on earth.

Scripture (Romans 5:12,15,17)

It was through one man that sin came into the world, and through sin death, and thus death has spread through the whole human race, because everyone has sinned. If death came to many through the offence of one man, how much greater an effect the grace of God has had, coming to so many and so plentifully as a free gift through the one man Jesus Christ. It was by one mans offence that death came to rule over all, but how much greater the reign in life of those who receive the fullness of grace and the gift of saving justice, through the one man, Jesus Christ.

Wednesday (Julian of Norwich)

Full lovingly does our Lord hold us when it seems to us we are nearly forsaken and cast away because of our sin—and deservedly so. For our courteous Lord does not want his servants to fall into despair even when we fall into sin. For our falling does not stop him loving us. He sustains us secretly even when we are in sin. He touches us gently and shows us our sin by the kindly light of mercy and grace. His will is that we should be like him in wholeness.

Scripture (2Cor. 5:17-19,21)

So for anyone who is in Christ, there is a new creation: the old order is gone and there is a new being for all to see. It is all God's work; he reconciled us to himself through Christ and he gave us the ministry of reconciliation. I mean, God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not holding anyone's faults against them. For our sake he made the sinless one a victim of sin, so that in him we might become the uprightness of God.

Thursday (2nd. Vatican Council, 'The Church Today')

For God has called man and still calls him so that with our entire being we might be joined to Him in endless sharing of a divine life beyond all corruption. Christ won this victory when he rose to life, since by his death he freed us from death. Hence, for every thoughtful person a solidly established faith provides the answer to their anxiety about what the future holds.

Scripture (John 12:44-47)

Whoever believes in me believes not in me but in the one who sent me, and whoever sees me sees the one who sent me. I have come into the world as light to prevent anyone who believes in me from staying in the dark anymore. I have not come to judge the world but to save the world.