

13th Sun. Ord. Time (B)
St. Athanasius and St. Francis Parishes
June 27, 28 2015

When you scroll through web pages on your computer, which pages make you stop and look?

When you channel surf on television, which channels grab your attention enough to stop and look a few minutes before moving on?

Hold those questions in your mind as we move on a bit. We will return to the questions later.

As we are hearing from Mark's gospel this liturgical cycle, I was curious if the Sunday order of readings (as we are hearing them) omits any of Mark's material. In particular I was curious about what if anything happens in Mark's gospel between the storm at sea of last weekend and the two miraculous cures of this weekend? In fact, there is one pericope/story between what we heard last weekend and the stories of this weekend. It is the story of Jesus expelling a demon from a man and then casting the same demon into a herd of 2000 swine, who then charge to their destruction over a cliff. I don't know the reason why it is skipped, but I am sure it is not out of concern for hog farmers. Sorry about that, people!

I then also quickly looked back over all 5 Chapters of Mark that lead up to today's two cures. What seems clear is that Mark is presenting us with a Jesus who doesn't just 'talk the talk' but a Jesus who also 'walks the walk'. Jesus preaches and tells stories, but then also illustrates the power of His teaching through a variety of miracles and cures. As noted, today we have two such cures: the hemorrhaging woman and the young girl who reportedly had died, the daughter of Jairus. Sticking with these two, there is something very particular about the people involved in these two miracles. They had what we might call a cooperating consciousness.

Take the example of the woman with the hemorrhage. She had been ill for years; she had nearly exhausted her funds seeking help. Two phrases in this healing incident are really interesting, and also important: Mark says "*she felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction*" and "*Jesus, aware at once that power had gone out from him...*" Just what is happening here?

We have five senses: sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste. We refer to hearing when we say, "I listen for God, I heard God telling me" and sight when we think or say, "I see God in this person, in that item of beauty." Not so often do we allude to our senses of taste and smell, but the Scriptures do make some such reference. Some psalms and one of the songs we sing at Mass says, "Taste and see the goodness of the Lord" and there are Scriptural references referring to a 'holy fragrance' about God. But in today's parable

we have the sense of touch. Jesus and the woman both 'feel' something of the holy, something of God. This 'cooperating consciousness' that I mentioned earlier, relates to touch, our sense of feeling. But have you been 'touched by God'? Today's gospel says that both Jesus and the woman felt the power of God.

In today's second miracle story, a rather large crowd had gathered around the house of Jairus. Many of them were weeping and wailing loudly. Jesus dismisses these but invites the girl's mother and father, and the three disciples who were with him, into the house. Notice who the three are: Peter, James and John. These are the same three Jesus will invite later to be with him at his Transfiguration. Those weeping and wailing claimed that the girl was dead. Jesus says 'she is asleep'. Here again the difference is that those invited into the house with Jesus are those who possessed a 'cooperating consciousness'. Jesus recognized in them some ability to 'feel' the power of God. He felt that they were at least open to being 'touched by God'. It was within range of their consciousness.

A cooperating consciousness makes our practice of the faith richer, more alive. It makes the practice of our faith an 'experience'. (I pick up this word from the last line of today's First Reading *"they who belong to God's company experience being alive."* And this moves any action of God from being merely physical to something spiritual. Two people are in separate car accidents. In both accidents the person could have been killed, but neither was. The one sees it as luck or the safety of crash bars; the other speaks of a God experience, that they even felt God during the accident. But how about something more commonplace?

What do you and I experience as we receive Holy Communion? Do I feel anything of the power of God? Do I feel a warmth in my body, as I take Holy Communion? Do I ever feel embraced by God when I receive the Eucharist? Or, is it pretty much just eating a dry host and drinking a bit of wine?

What do you and I feel as we hear the words of forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation? I remember some years ago a man confessing his sins and making his Act of Contrition. His voice was trembling as he did this. When I stood to place my hand on his head and speak the words of forgiveness, I literally felt his body trembling. But then the most grace-filled thing happened. His entire body quieted down as I continued with the words. It was amazing. I don't remember when or where. And neither are important; I only remember that it happened. The man had a 'cooperating consciousness'. He was open to the touch of God, and he felt God. And as he felt God, I did as well.

We do many 'holy things'. Yet what we need most is to feel them. If we never ever feel the power and goodness of God, it all becomes routine. But what if I was as interested in God and the things of God as I am in the things that grab my attention on the web and on television. Pray to be grabbed and held by God. Seek and ask to be enchanted with God.to be touched by and actually feel the wonder of God. And maybe even this week!