

HOMILY OF HIS EXCELLENCY ARCHBISHOP CHRISTOPHE PIERRE
APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES
TUESDAY OF THE 4TH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME
TWENTY-SEVENTH WORKSHOP FOR BISHOPS, NATIONAL CATHOLIC BIOETHICS CENTER
“OMNI MANDALAY HOTEL AT LAS COLINAS, IRVING, TEXAS
FEBRUARY 4, 2020

My Dear Friends in Christ,

Once more, as the Apostolic Nuncio, I greet you in the name of the Holy Father and express his paternal affection for you, assuring of his prayers and spiritual closeness. Our Gospel today is quite fitting for a gathering such as this, presenting two miraculous healings that Jesus performs in favor of two women: Jairus' daughter and the hemorrhaging woman. These episodes can be interpreted at two levels: the purely physical – Jesus encounters human suffering and heals the body – and the spiritual – Jesus heals the human heart and offers salvation, asking for faith in Him.

In the first case – the raising of Jairus' daughter – which is interrupted by the story of the hemorrhaging woman – Jesus says to the synagogue official, *“Do not be afraid, but have faith!”* Jesus hears the concern in the father's voice; he is attentive to his desire for mercy for his daughter. It is a reminder of the *reverence*, which includes listening, that we must have in Catholic health care facilities, not only for the patient but also for their families. Jesus accompanies the man to the place where the girl was and exclaims: *“Talitha koum,”* which means, *“Little girl, I say to you, arise!”*

Before jumping to the miraculous cure, we must not forget Jesus' invitation to the man: *have faith!* Authentic Catholic health care invites people to faith in Jesus who can heal *and* save. Catholic health care necessarily involves evangelization and mission – inviting others to have faith, even in the darkest and most dire of circumstances. While some people ridicule Jesus, he accompanies the little girl's father and mother, and, seeing their desire and faith, performs a miracle of love, raising the girl up – bringing her back from death to life.

At the heart of Christian faith is the mystery of the Resurrection. Pope Francis, commenting on this passage said:

“The message is clear, and it can be summed up in one question: do we believe that Jesus can heal us and can raise us from the dead? The entire Gospel is written in the light of this faith: Jesus is risen, He has conquered death, and by his victory we too will rise again. This faith, which for the first Christians was sure, can tarnish and become uncertain, to the point that some may confuse resurrection with reincarnation. The Word of God ... invites us to live in the certainty of the Resurrection: Jesus is the Lord, Jesus has power over evil and over death, and He wants to lead us to house of the Father, where life reigns.” (POPE FRANCIS, ANGELUS, 28 JUNE 2015)

The episode about the woman suffering from a hemorrhage also emphasizes how Jesus comes to liberate the person in his or her totality. The miracle takes place in two phases: the first is the physical healing, but this is closely tied to a deeper, interior healing – that which bestows God's grace upon those open to Him in faith. The woman, because of her hemorrhaging, was considered ritually impure. She was forced to live in isolation, as someone unclean; nevertheless, she had so much hope and faith in Jesus and

His mercy that she reached out to touch Jesus. This is faith - to touch Jesus is to draw from Him the grace that saves. Power flows from Jesus, and He notices it. Although the woman may have had fear admitting that it was she who touched Jesus, the Lord reassures her, *“Daughter, your faith has saved you.”*

Jesus not only heals her bodily but also spiritually. The key element is faith. We see it not only in her and in the daughter of synagogue official, but also in the healing of the paralytic, whose sins Jesus forgave, and in the Lukan account of the healing of the ten lepers – all ten were healed but only the one who came to give thanks to God – a Samaritan – was saved through faith.

In today’s Gospel Jesus tells the hemorrhaging woman: *“Daughter, your faith has saved you. Go in peace, and be healed of your affliction.”* Her story and the story of Jairus’ daughter invite us to overcome a purely horizontal and materialistic view of life that is sometimes present in modern medicine and bioethics. Pope Francis last year said:

“Medicine, by definition, is at the service of human life, and as such it acts as an essential and undeniable reference to the person in his spiritual and material integrity, in his individual and social dimension. Medicine is at the service of man, of all men, of every man.” (POPE FRANCIS, UDIENZA ALLA FEDERAZIONE NAZIONALE DEGLI ORDINI DEI MEDICI CHIRURGHI E DEGLI ODONTOIATRI, 20 SEPTEMBER 2019)

Although we are justified in asking God to cure our problems, including our physical ones, what we should ask for even more is an ever-stronger faith, a firm trust in His love, and confidence in Divine Providence, which does not abandon us. With the disciples, we could cry out this morning, *“Lord, increase our faith!”* Faith is the force of authentic life, providing fullness to our humanity.

We, who claim to believe in Christ, must acknowledge this personally and in our work and ministry if we are to promote and build a culture of life, so that those to whom we minister and to whom health care professionals attend, especially the weakest and most vulnerable members of our society, may experience the love of God who frees and saves. Only then, with Jesus, can we say: *Your faith has saved you. Go, in peace.*