

**Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle B**  
**Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception – July 1, 2018**  
**Reverend Robert W. Marshall, Jr., Pastor**

I saw a television news report some years ago about a young child who had been trapped under the wheels of a truck. A police officer arrived on the scene and called for help. Obviously the child was in terrible pain and was in danger of losing consciousness. When the officer learned that paramedics were some 15 minutes away, he knew somehow that he must act. Getting on his hands and knees, he placed the front end of the truck on his back. Then summoning strength he didn't know that he had, he arched his back and lifted the truck up enough that the child's parents could pull him out. We've heard stories like that before – in the midst of danger or dire circumstances, adrenalin kicks in and a person finds tremendous strength or courage that they could never muster at ordinary times.

In some respects, that's what happens in today's gospel. Mark tells us that Jairus was a synagogue official. He had a vested interest in maintaining the Jewish religion free from upstarts like this Jesus who was traveling about. Others might fall for the tricks, the so-called miracles, but a synagogue official like Jairus never would. Yet at some point, Jairus heard enough about Jesus to intrigue him, to spark some interest in what Jesus had to say. Jairus must have looked deeper, listened to the message that Jesus was preaching. He may have even wondered if this Jesus was indeed the Messiah – the one Israel expected to deliver them. But he was a synagogue official. Jairus would have never have publicly approached Jesus, never have professed faith in Jesus – it was too risky, too inappropriate. It would have meant the end of his career, the loss of the respect of the members of the synagogue. Even if his suspicions were true, even if Jesus was the Promised One, the Anointed, the Messiah, nothing could have made Jairus risk everything to approach Jesus in faith – nothing except his daughter, that is.

I suspect that if Jairus himself had gotten sick, he might have held back, he might have resisted the call of the Spirit to approach Jesus for help. But as any parent can tell you, when your child is sick, when someone you love so dearly is close to death, all resistance vanishes – you find the courage that you need. And that's what Jairus did. He fell at the feet of Jesus and begged him to save his child from death. This was not a man who was trying to hedge his bets – figuring that he might give Jesus a try in case the doctors didn't know what they were doing. Approaching Jesus was too risky for that. No, Jairus came before Jesus in humble faith, animated by the courage that is a gift of the Spirit.

The woman who was hemorrhaging had courage as well. Under Jewish law, her affliction – the constant contact with blood – kept her ritually impure. And anyone she touched would be similarly impure. So she knew that she would probably not be able to come close to Jesus because everyone kept their distance from her. And surely his disciples had been instructed to keep the impure away from Jesus. Yet so great was her faith, so desperate her situation, that she risked ridicule and rejection and hoped just to touch the cloak of the one who could end her misery. When Jesus asked who had touched him, she knew she had been caught. Yes, she was afraid – but she could have quietly gotten lost in the crowd and not admitted to Jesus what she had done. Instead, she summoned what courage she had left and told Jesus her story – her search for a cure, her faith that a mere touch of his garment could cure her.

This two-part gospel has important lessons for us. The courage demonstrated by the synagogue official and by the hemorrhaging woman in extraordinary circumstances should be a part of our ordinary prayer life. When times get bad, when our lives are difficult, we find that we pray more often, more fervently, more specifically. All of us run to God in those trying times – complaining about the injustice of the situation or begging the Lord for help. But in the ordinary, everyday, humdrum times, we might let things slide a bit. Our relationship with God is not necessarily a priority. Maybe we say a few rote prayers, but our fear or our indifference keeps us from really opening our heart or examining our lives in God's Spirit. If things are going reasonably well, why rock the boat? Why ask for trouble? But that's when we need the courage that is the gift of the Holy Spirit – the courage to identify our true needs, our deepest desires and the courage to place them humbly before the feet of the Lord. As Christians, we are constantly reminded that we are counter-cultural. The commandments of the Lord do not conform to the policies of either political party and certainly are not endorsed in many public opinion polls. Christians in our society need courage more than ever because our faith is in the Word of God. Yes, in this season of the year called ordinary, we need to pray for that extraordinary courage and strength – the kind of courage and strength that will sustain us, the kind of courage and strength that it takes to build an honest, open, loving relationship with our God who can accomplish all things.