12th Sunday, June 30, 2024:

DO NOT BE AFRAID, JUST HAVE FAITH.

The Theme of our brief reflection this weekend is the assurance that Christ gave to Jairus when he received the sad and discouraging message of his daughter's death: DO NOT BE AFRAID, JUST HAVE FAITH.

The author of the book of Wisdom takes us in today's first reading back to the Genesis account of creation. At creation, God made all things to be good (Gen 1:10, 12, 18, and 25), and man to be immortal like him. Infact, he created man in his own immortal image and likeness (Gen 1:26). So, like the first reading stated, God did not create death. How then did death come into being? The first reading tells us that it was as a result of Devil's envy. By this, I should think that he was referring to the fall of man to the deception of the Devil in the form of a serpent (Gen 3:1-19). Suffering and death came in as a consequence of that fall. The First reading concludes by emphatically stating that it is only those who belong to the company of the Devil that will experience death.

By this last emphasis, we can understand that the author was not talking about physical death. Physical death is for every living thing, but the fact that he excluded the children of God from this death means that he was talking of eternal death. This eternal death is not for those who believe in Christ. Death came as a result of man's fall, but the death of Christ has sanctified our physical death and turned it into a gateway to eternal life, which was the initial destiny of man.

In today's gospel, Christ raised Jairus' daughter from dead. For the records, this Jairus' daughter is no longer alive today, as we speak. Her resurrection from the dead, just as that of Lazarus (John 11:38-44), was a demonstration of Christ's power over death, and that Jesus will save from the pangs of death, on the last day, all those who believe in him, just as he promised (John 6:40).

However, while still in this world, we who believe in him are not exempted from the ups and downs, and occasional humanly hopeless situations of life. What then are we expected to do? Let us illustrate briefly with one of the miracles of today's gospel, precisely the raising of Jairus' daughter from dead.

Jairus came to Jesus when his daughter was very sick and at the point of death. He pleaded with Jesus to come with him to the house and touch his daughter, that she might be healed and not die. Jesus followed him. But along the way, friends and relatives of Jairus brought another message: " Your daughter is already dead, why do

you still disturb the teacher? But Jesus ignored the messengers and assured Jairus: DO NOT BE AFRAID, JUST HAVE FAITH.

At that very point in time, Jairus had two options: either to listen to the messengers and tell Christ, well you have heard what they said, so don't bother anymore, let me go and bury my daughter. Or to listen to and trust Christ assuring him: "do not be afraid, just have faith". In other words, Jesus told him, you are in my company, just trust me. Eventually, he chose to ignore the messengers and lean on Christ and his assurances.

In our own ups and downs, changes and chances, and vicissitudes of life, a lot of us may have received this kind of faith-dampening messages too from those who wonder why we should continue to pray when for them; from their human perspective, things have gone from bad to worse rather than changing for the better. They question your continued religious devotion even in the midst of vicissitudes of life. Like Jairus, we too have two options in such circumstances: Listen to them and turn away from Christ, or ignore them and lean on Christ who is also assuring us today: "don't be afraid, just have faith; just trust me; just believe in me.

We can see this kind of faith and trust that Jesus wants from us in Psalm 23:4. There the Psalmist did not say that because of his relationship with God he wouldn't pass through the valley of the shadow of death, no. He said: "Even though I should walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

You were made in the image of God; you were made to be immortal like God. Death has no power over you because you are not in the company of the devil. But you need to resiliently hold on to Christ and trust him even in the humanly hopeless situations of life. Do not give in to the faith-dampening messages and discouragements around you. Jesus speaks to you today: "Do not be afraid, just have faith."

Peace be with you!

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