

**Young at Heart**  
**13<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)**  
**(Mk 5:21-43)**

The raising of Jairus' daughter is a central miracle in the Gospel of Mark, who is usually brief, but in this case is even more detailed than other Gospels. It is one of a few places he recalls the actual Aramaic words spoken by Jesus: *talitha kume*. These are words not just for the people in the event, but for everyone who comes to know Christ through his Gospel. They are words of healing, power, and hope; words upon which we build our lives and our relationship with Christ.

This Gospel story is also unique in that it is two stories, the healing of an older woman, and the raising of a young girl. Whether they knew each other in real life we do not know, the Gospel does not say. But in Christ they are connected, and the Gospel makes clear these two miracles go together: the girl was twelve, and for twelve years the woman suffered. When the girl came forth from the womb, the womb of the other woman began to bleed; when the girl reached her adulthood (and died), the other came to the end of her efforts to find healing.

In this double miracle there is a possible lesson about the healing of adulthood and childhood. These are two parts of our life, and even though we grow older with years, Jesus insists that we "become like children" in order to enter the Kingdom of God (Mt 18:3). The body may change and grow old, but the soul has no age, and is always young. At least, it is meant to remain so.

However, the world has a way of taking its toll on a person, inflicting injury after injury, so that the soul's youthful spirit dies. Childhood innocence is easily robbed and lost, either by our own terrible sins, or by those of others. Many people carry tremendous problems within themselves into adulthood, overflowing into their relationships and lives in general: bitterness, unhappiness, cynicism, depression, destructive behavior. These injuries stretch back many years, and become worse with time. Doctors and therapists cannot heal them, and prescribe heavy medications and anti-depressants to mask their symptoms.

Christians, however, have Christ, and the words he speaks in today's Gospel: *talitha kume*. I would go so far as to say this is a *necessary* miracle for being Christian. A Christian – someone who in faith has "touched" Christ – is someone who lives with the joy of restored innocence, someone who is young at heart, regardless of physical age, regardless of past injury and any evil life may have dealt along the way.

There is a famous phrase applied to the Blessed Virgin Mary, referring to her Immaculate Conception and fullness of grace: Mary is “*younger than sin.*”<sup>1</sup> The healing grace of Christ restores us to lost innocence, to the childhood condition of man prior to the fall. All Christians, by definition, live in the context of this grace, which restores love, trust, and hope. It allows us again to see the goodness of God, and the goodness of creation.

Christ offers this grace to all who seek him. Corresponding to our hand which reaches hesitatingly for his garment, is his hand which raises us up definitively. Corresponding to our meager efforts to seek him “from behind,” from our condition of shame, is his act of seeking us face to face.

It is above all in the Eucharist that we find this grace: “*Give her something to eat*” (Mk 5:43). At every Mass we proclaim the “lifting up of our hearts” and spirits to the Lord, and immediately prior to Holy Communion we pray the beautiful words of the centurion, highly applicable here: “*Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.*” Christ entered the room and spoke the word that healed and raised the girl. Likewise, in Holy Communion, Christ enters our “room,” that hidden place of our soul (cf. Mt 6:6), and speaks the holy words that give it life, *talitha kume*.

No matter the evil life has dealt us, which only seems to increase with the years and burden us with early old age, Christ in the Eucharist makes us young again, raises our spirit to life. Christians live in the power of this miracle.

It is not only in this life that Jesus speaks the words to our soul which raise us up, *talitha kume*. These words have a second application after death. “*He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day*” (Jn 6:54).

The soul is not “killed” by the evils of the world. Neither is the soul “killed” by the death of the body, it continues to live beyond death. Thus, Jesus tells the crowd, “*The child is not dead, but asleep*” (Mk 5:39). He said the same of Lazarus (cf. Jn 11:11). Jesus wants us to understand that in him, in the power of these words and his Eucharistic presence, there is no death. It is a mere sleep, from which we will assuredly awake in a brand new and glorious Day.

On that Day, our eyes will open to the face of Christ, his hand will be grasping us from the grave, and his words will be the first thing we hear: *talitha kume*. Some people ask how old we will be in the resurrection? The answer is, as young as the soul.

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<sup>1</sup> Georges Bernanos, *Diary of a Country Priest*. quoted by St. John Paul II at Lourdes in 1983