

Last week, in observing Jesus and his disciples tossed about at sea during a horrific storm, we looked at prayer as a drastic plea for God's saving help. We spoke of such prayer as panic prayer. We said that this panic praying, though prevalent in every culture and religion, is not liturgical because it does not include a sense of a trusting or hoping regarding the one who is praying. If the truth be known, the one making such a prayer **may have** no real expectation of deliverance **at all**. Panic prayers are based upon **an internal reflex of** fear and not upon **an actual hope** or expectation of deliverance.

**Of most importance** though, desperate, fear inspired, panic prayers cannot build a church. For church building, growing and development requires faith. "Why are you afraid?" Jesus asks his disciples after **he has saved them and** the storm had subsided, "have you still no faith?"

In our gospel today, we encounter two prayers, or yearnings to God for deliverance. **These two prayerful requests** are very different from the panic prayers of the disciples last week. For, instead of breaking forth from fear, each prayer or request in today's gospel breaks forth from an **INCREDIBLE** hope in the healing and saving power of God. And what is driving these two prayers is **something** even beyond hope; these prayers exhibit nothing short of the

**"expectation" that they will, not only be heard but also be answered. It is this kind of prayer, this kind of hope, this kind of expecting God to listen and to act, it is this kind of faith that can build and sustain a church.**

**In his encounter with them, Jesus is totally amazed and awed by the faith of both the woman who touched his robe and Jairus, the leader of the synagogue. And I believe that it is not only their faith that is exemplary to him and for us today, it is also the display of courage they show in their very asking of Jesus to heal. For in beckoning the Christ to heal, both Jairus and the woman must step outside the established customs and codes required to fulfill the letter of religious law in and for their day.**

**Imagine the courage: Jairus, one of the leaders in the Jewish synagogue, publically asking Jesus to come with him to his home to heal his daughter. Surely, Jairus knows about this unconventional Rabbi. I am sure that, by this time, Jesus would have been blacklisted from synagogues. For it was in a synagogue, that he healed a demonic man and was then called a devil himself by many of the Jewish officials.**

**And what about the time Jesus, again in a synagogue, showed himself to be a "Sabbath-breaker", healing a man's withered hand when Jesus could have postponed the healing to the following day.**

**And another, is Jairus aware of the time, again in a**

**synagogue, when Jesus healed a paralyzed man and then had the audacity to say to the man that the man's sins were forgiven? Was this not an act reserved for God alone?**

**And a really crazy thought: Could some of these events have actually taken place in the synagogue where Jairus was the leader?**

**It is such an outlandish hope, and an unfounded expectation that Jairus exhibits in the healing powers of this man Jesus? For Jairus actually, commits professional suicide as a synagogue leader, when he publically throws himself at the foot of Jesus and begs him repeatedly: "Rabbi, come and lay your hands upon my dying child, that she may be made well and live."**

**And what about this woman who touches the hem of the robe of Jesus? What about her courage! Based upon Jewish law and tradition any woman with a flow of blood was considered to be unclean. Imagine this woman, bleeding for twelve years, the same number of years that Jairus' daughter had been alive.**

**Because of her illness, during all this time, this woman has not been able to share food, companionship or even a wooden bench with another human being. By law, and situation, she is an untouchable.**

**So imagine the courage exhibited in making her aggressive prayer of faith: "If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well." (Oh if I could only have such faith!)**

**Notice too that Jesus does not want the woman's faith to go unacknowledged. For this unclean, untouchable woman who so wishes to remain hidden, is now forced by the Christ to come out into the open. "Daughter", ( and here I imagine that Jesus lifted her up by the hand) "your faith has made you well. Go in peace and in full view of those watching, be healed of your disease."**

**Jesus knows that this woman suffers not only from the disease of her bleeding but also from being alone, separated and seen as unclean, but now daughter: "Your faith has made you well."**

**So faith, as hope, expectation and courage, are all bundled up in the prayers we witness in our gospel reading today. Now, what does this faith look like for us gathered here in St Paul's Parish today?**

**Could such an example of faith be a rallying cry for us seek to be even more a people of hope and not only hope but also a people of expectation, expecting God to act?**

**For you see, the courageous faith of Jairus and this unnamed woman was brimming with hope. And, because of their faith, they were actually living as though the "not yet" had already come.**

**Like an expectant child, to whom a parent has promised bread, we too must hope in God.**

**Like a music listener who willingly follows a dark interplay of disharmonies, but only in the certainty that these disharmonies will be resolved sooner or later, we too must confidently expect to know the healing presence of God.**

**Or like the compliant patient who takes a bitter medicine so that the pain is finally taken away, once asked for- we too must expect **to receive the peace**, courage and strength that come from the healing power of God.**

**Dietrich Bonhoeffer once noted that a faith that does not hope is not healthy, actually faith without hope is sick. And I preach this to myself as much as I do to you. We must all once again find hope, even in **the face of** chaos, death, chronic suffering, loss, **bad news**, uncertainties and fears. We must move from what we see to be real to what we know to be real.**

**If we do not, we will become cynical like the hungry child who no longer wishes to eat or the tired person who no longer desires to sleep.**

**As a people of faith, we must remember that even in the darkest of times, it is not a disgrace to hope even beyond measure.**

**No, we must never be ashamed of our hope in believing in the healing and sustaining power of God. If the truth be known, it is our lack of hope that is shameful.**

**Though it annoyed the crowd, hope and expectation did not disappoint Jairus or the woman who touched the garment of the Christ that day. True hope will never disappoint us either. For the more we dare to hope in the healing and sustaining power of God, the more we will truly live and the more we will truly know and simply not presume ourselves to be the church**

**Thank you expectant lady of faith and thank you courageous Jairus for showing us that hope, and even expectation, are so needed in our journey of faith and life with God.**

al part of faith.