

## **Saturday gospel Luke 8:41-56**

***'Who touched me? ...'***

**Tuesday gospel 11: 1-10**

*"Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." And he said to them, "When you pray, say: 'Our Father who art in heaven ...'"*



On Wednesday, after the noon prayer, Linda left the chapel and sat down at the table, waiting for the bread to be broken and the soup to be shared. She does that every day when the mission is open. A sign that prayer and the breaking of the bread, as repetitive they may look on the outside, renew the life within, with a creativity and dynamism that are revealed only through Linda's smile. "Linda, how has prayer life been for you since you joined the church?" I asked her. "Very good ..." she replied. "I come every day and on Sundays to receive communion. It's very good. I still have the colourful prayer rope I received when I came at the beginning," she continues with a laugh. "What do you do with it?" "I pray ... I pray every day with it." "How do you pray?" "I say: Our Father ... with the prayer rope every day."

**Wednesday, the feast of St James – Br Luke reads from the letter:**

*"What if a man comes into your church wearing a gold ring and good clothes? And at the same time a poor man comes wearing old clothes. What if you show respect to the man in good clothes and say, 'Come and sit in this good place'? But if you say to the poor man, 'Stand up over there,' or 'Sit on the floor by my feet,' are you not thinking that one is more important than the other?"*

As br Luke was reading the passage after noon prayer, Carrie came inside the chapel. She couldn't spot any free seats so she sat on the floor, just in front of the icon of the Mother of God, at her feet. People did move to make space for her, even though all seats were taken. But Carrie chose the better place. The place where humility encounters the holiness of the Mother of God. Even though it seemed that the epistle was judging us in that very moment, the light and the feeling of the chapel was different and kind. It was rather the freedom of the poor that preferred the lower seat, the one that brings you closer to the feet of the Mother of God. It was meant to show us the place of prayer and the place where the gospel is listened to. At the feet of the Theotokos, because through her the voice of her son is touching us with mercy. In

that very moment, Carrie resembled Edna, the way we see her in a picture that is very well known within the community, in which Edna was sitting in the same spot, looking at the same eyes. The eyes of the Mother of God. Many years have passed since that picture of Edna was taken and yet somehow, at the mission, there are eyes who look for the countenance of Theotokos in the same way. With a sincere love that never betrays.

The following day, at the table, during breakfast, Carrie shared a story about how her mother used to cook for her. Being poor, they could only afford a certain type of meat every now and then. Carrie shares those moments with us so we can all see the goodness of a mother for her daughter, to see and understand the joy on her face.

### **Friday - gathering thoughts and questions about today's gospel**

The gospel starts with the pain of the father. His child was dying. He humbles himself, being the ruler of the synagogue, maybe the most important person within the community. He comes and bows down at Jesus' feet. It is through his pain and distress that he touches Jesus' feet. Just like the woman with the issue of blood. She touches Him out of a long and deep distress. The suffering of the man is touching the body of Christ, as He is touching the sleeping child.

Paying attention to this heart, the gospel takes us deep and lifts us high again. The heart of the father is like a roller-coaster. For a father dies and lives through his children. It proves the silence of the Father to his Son's prayer on the cross.

In the gospel, the father comes in distress and with hope. Jesus gives him more hope because he comes with him. As he comes, He is interrupted. That was not a good time. His child was dying. And Jesus stops to find out who touched Him. During this interruption the news comes: "Do not trouble the teacher, your daughter is dead ...". While the father was sinking into the deep, like Peter, the voice of Jesus is pulling him back. "Do not be afraid." Where is his heart now? As he is trying to stay afloat, he had to face the laughing of people, the mocking of the resurrection, the experience that is given to only the few who believe, and he is asked to believe. He is taken out of it by being taken closer to his daughter, who is still dead. He is told not to cry because she was only sleeping. What is he to do now since he cannot even cry. Only a little while longer until he will be amazed. And then comes the comforting silence, shared with the one who is alive, shared with his wife and their child, with Christ and a couple of his disciples that He chose to be with them. How is the heart of the father now? If he had not endured and humbled himself and trusted with faith, he would have not known.

#### ***Who touched me?***

The touching of the fringe of the vestments, the quiet mystery of the resurrection and the exposure of faith are the lines that open up parts of the gospel on Sunday. Why does Jesus reveal the faith of the one who hides and why does He keep silent the resurrection of the ruler's daughter? The intentionality of touch. Many touched him but only one got healed,

because of a faith that broke barriers and rules, a faith that desired for one to be cleansed and not remain impure. It is the touch that comes out of faith and suffering. Even the fringe of the garments, are wet with grace that was poured on the head of Aaraon.

It is like touching a cup of coffee offered to a homeless man early in the morning. The intentionality of the heart and the eyes that see him change a heart because it splashes the man with grace, when the act is done in faith. And so healing happens around us without even being noticed.

***“And when he came to the house, he permitted no one to enter with him, except Peter and John and James, and the father and mother of the child.”***

Fr Philip’s talk on Friday touched many hearts and opened up many questions. Because marriage, as father said on Friday, is the icon used to reflect the love that the Bridegroom Christ has for His Bride, the church. There is love at the beginning, as there is love at the end, as there is love all the way, and there is the perfect love, on the cross. Like Eve is born out of Adam, so is the church born of the new Adam. Born out of love that is faithful to the Father, that offers a cross to the new Adam to bear. That’s where the encounter happens. That’s where the purpose is revealed.

The ascetical movement of marriage, when lived and not resisted to, opens in us the eye of charity. The eye of mercy. And as the bride and the bridegroom share in the ascetical struggle (whatever that might be), the eye is cleansed more and more. It is the water that is cleansing the eyes, the fresh water early in the morning, as the tears are piercing the hardness of the heart that learns to care.

It is the grace of the first encounter, that is offered freely to those who encounter themselves in love and truth. It is the grace that cleanses the eye at the beginning, so that we may see with our eyes and hear with our ears. So that we can we see each other as Jesus saw Nathaniel under the fig tree. We do not know at times if the grace is taken or lost because of lack of asceticism within the communion, but if it does, it is only for the union to find out by itself that the cleansing of the eyes is good and desired and it is the sign of a perfect love. And as the eye of charity in us becomes personal, the first beneficiaries of that are the bride and the bridegroom, because the marriage is the place where that eye has been washed daily. And we can ask ourselves what do we see, when we say we see? The icon of what we see in each other is the proof of an eye that being cleansed every day.

We see in the gospel that the parents partake together in the suffering of the child in the middle of the community. And so they are given to see from very close the reality of the resurrection. It is through the grace that they see the light of the resurrection, that is free and full of gratuity.

They see the light that is even more kind to an eye that has been cleansed and is about to be

cleansed even more, because the universality of the resurrection is just about to be revealed fully.

It is the eye of charity that, when cleansed by the tears of marriage, helps to see in each other the face of Christ. And then we understand why Christ reveals Himself in the poor.. It is essential for the eye to be cleansed in order for the faithfulness to each other to become a reality that never dies. And also for the Bridegroom to be faithful to his cross and the voice of the Father, and for the bride to do the same, by being faithful to the cross that is being carried. Historically, the first liturgy was celebrated at the last supper. We know what followed. Jesus is seized and crucified and the church (the bride) is scattered. However, it is the new Eve who remains faithful to Him, and she does that on behalf of all the church who is broken and afraid. She can do that because she is always at the heart of the church, and therefore she can be there on behalf of the whole church, because the church never crucified the Bridegroom, aside from the son of perdition, so that the scriptures might be fulfilled.

So that's why faithfulness to the cross in marriage is essential. The spouses (to put it lightly in modern terms) can have little faith at times and they can be afraid, they can hide from the danger and find within themselves more or less faith, reasons to hide or to come closer. But when the cross is magnified within the community, they do not crucify. They are either on the cross, by the cross, or waiting like Peter, crying and afraid, waiting to be forgiven. But the bride never crucifies the bridegroom as the bridegroom never betrays the church.

If that happens, then there is no covenant left. There is forgiveness and more love to come, but no covenant. Because the covenant brings you to the cross in order for the universality of the resurrection to shine and be kind to all.

So, it is the eye of charity that needs to be cleansed in us. This does not only apply to married people or monastics. The question is not who is greater than the other because all are called to be servants. The question is rather who, through their ascetical practice, can see with mercy and increase a faithful life to the cross. It is true again that in a marriage the first beneficiary of a clean eye is the spouse. But then this is open to the whole community who gets only the benefits, if any benefits are to be found in an eye that does not see perfectly yet. Because more tears are about to be shed. And more so for joy than for anything else.



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