



10th Gospel of Luke 13:10-17

"And there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity for eighteen years; she was bent over and could not fully straighten herself. And when Jesus saw her, he called her and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your infirmity."

Bits and pieces from Friday's communal reflection on today's gospel:

"... they went to the tomb when the sun had risen." (Sunday gospel at orthros)

It was Jacob who reminded us on Friday about the day of the Lord. The holiness of the day. The icon of the gospel today is a beautiful image of the resurrection and its light. Christ is risen! The sun had risen, and the woman is straightened up, so she can see Him face to face. It is the day in which the holiness of God is fully shared with man. The man has become holy. He has been cleansed, sanctified, purified, restored and having the experience of God's mercy within his heart. The anger of the ruler of the synagogue reminds also of the resurrection. More precisely of the sermon of St John Chrysostom. Christ is risen and the hell is angered. As we can hear and see the joy of the community that Christ is risen, so also, we can sense the anger of hell. The ruler is angered.

The woman with the spirit of infirmity

Eliana spoke about a person she knows from the neighbourhood, who lives with this type of physical infirmity. She now spends more time downtown. Eliana was wondering about her condition. What it means to live in that position all the time. Not being able to look at the sun. Not knowing for sure what is the time of the day. Not knowing clearly whether it is day or night. Does she know that Christ is risen? Eliana sees her at times feeling angered. The burden she lives with has made her soul heavier. We meet many people at the mission who live being bent over because of the oppression they experienced. Because they have been stepped over. Just this week, a woman was sharing the anger she lives with, being so much disrespected and pushed around by the Canadian experience. She was angry that she could not find a job, any job, that would allow her to take care of her children. She told us about how she had to move to a smaller place, in a basement, a place she does not even know if she can afford anyway. Her life experience in Canada has humiliated her deeply, leaving her despondent. She feels she is losing the dignity of being human. She cries and she is angry. She cries as she hopes.

It was also Eliana who noticed the lowliness of the woman. She did not hide in her infirmity. We can see, from the reaction of the ruler, the value of her life. "Why should we heal her today? She can wait longer. Maybe another time" (Eliana). And yet, she faced the authority that condemned her by being present within the temple. Before Jesus seeing her, she had two companions: the religious authorities, who postponed forever her healing, and Satan, who does

his job well. That was her support. And yet, she comes out to be seen by Jesus. It is only the glance of God who sees the one who is angered by the humiliation she endured. “Jesus saw her because nobody else did.” (Eliana)

Another young volunteer, who is Coptic and wears a bigger cross, is always happy to help with anything. He reminds us that many people are not healed today, and they are living with all kind of infirmities and all kind of diseases. But somehow, many endure this bending over, this humiliation received from Satan or from us, people, with a kind of peace. He thinks that God sends His grace upon them to ease the anger. To give peace to a heart that has been oppressed. Like Laura used to say, “God changes our humiliation in humility”. Maybe that’s what it means to be restored?

On Saturday morning, after prayer, Br Luke reads from the life of St Silouan. About the sweetness of His grace, as our patron saint witnessed it within his heart. It is so sweet that it makes you pray and shed tears for all people, caring for all in an unseen way. Even for those who harmed us. Even for the enemies. That’s how the grace of God moves the soul. That’s how we know that the grace is sweet, when it moves the soul to forgiveness. If we follow her movement, it makes us sensitive to the pain of others. We might never be healed of what we experienced. But what the grace heals is the vision of our eyes. The presence of anger, because of being hurt, might endure within the heart. But we start to see and relate with the pain of others. And this pain is received within the heart. This is a sign of holiness and a sign of restoration. Because we start to see the humiliation of others and we share in their hope of being straightened up, we share in their hope of resurrection. We participate in the movement of the Holy Spirit.

We do not know how the bent over woman endured her condition. We know that her companions were Satan and the rulers. We do not know how much anger troubles her heart because of her infirmity and because of the way she was seen by others. The gospel tells us that when she was restored there was no anger left in her heart. It seemed that the anger was fully sunk within the hearts of the rulers. It did not disappear completely from within the community that witnesses the restoration of the human being, but it found a place in the heart of those who think that the woman was not worthy of being restored.

Today, in Canada, there is much anger in the heart of many. It seems at times that they argue with each other but, from the beginning to the end, they share in the same thing: the belief that the one who is humiliated is not worth healing. Their suffering is immoral. You hear this at the mission, every week (and this week was no different) – the captivity of harm reduction, that keeps people humiliated within their struggles or the radicality of those who oppose it because

they think some suffering is not moral enough. Those who think nothing should be done because people are not worth healing. Because somehow, they suffer illegally. It is their fault. It is their fault if they fell into addiction, their fault they run away from war in a country who does not need them, their fault because they ended up on the street, their fault because they are confused about who they are, and so on. These mistaken views oppose each other and share in the viciousness of keeping people captive to humiliation. They argue on the reason where they agree on the substance. The gospel is in neither of them but offers us the path of truth in order for us to open our heart to it.

Jesus not only heals and restores the dignity and bestows holiness on man. He takes on our faults. On the cross. All our faults. The church is the place where people share the burdens and faults, carrying each other and always trying to be lifting each other up, even when there is no strength., because Christ is on the cross. It is the grace that open the eyes of the one who is humiliated to the place where mercy is about to come from. In Christ, from very human heart. Even from our own, at the very end. So no more anger would spread in the room, but dissipate completely because it found no hospitable heart.