

## Reflection for Monday of Holy Week 7<sup>th</sup> April 2020

All the Reflections for this Holy Week will have the theme of 'Touching.'

### **Luke 8: 40-42, 49-56**

Now when Jesus returned, the crowd welcomed him, for they were all waiting for him. Just then there came a man named Jairus, a leader of the synagogue. He fell at Jesus' feet and begged him to come to his house, for he had an only daughter, about twelve years old, who was dying. As he went the crowds pressed in on him...

While he was still speaking, someone came from the leader's house to say, 'Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the teacher any longer.' When Jesus heard this, he replied, 'Do not fear. Only believe and she will be saved.' When he came to the house, he did not allow anyone to enter with him, except Peter, John and James, and the child's father and mother. They were all weeping and wailing for her, but he said, 'Do not weep; for she is not dead but sleeping.' And they laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. But he took her by the hand and called out, 'Child, get up!' Her spirit returned, and she got up at once. Then he directed them to give her something to eat. Her parents were astounded.

It seemed to me that in this time of isolation many of us are sadly not able to feel the physical touch of another human being; we cannot enjoy the warmth of a hug, a comforting cuddle or even a handshake. Thus, it seemed appropriate to take the theme of 'Touching' for my Holy Week reflections.

In today's gospel reading we hear of Jairus, a leader of the synagogue and hence a respected figure in the community coming to Jesus and pleading for his help in healing his very sick child. Jesus responds to this heartfelt plea and sets out for Jairus's house; but progress is inevitably slow as the crowds press around him and try to touch him for their own healing. Jesus cannot simply stride ahead he must take his time and, if necessary, stop and exchange a handshake or place a hand of blessing on a supplicant.

How intensely frustrating all this must be for Jairus whose only thought is for his own beloved daughter and her well-being. He cannot see or appreciate the needs of others in the crowd; it is his need that remains paramount and all the time Jesus lingers or halts his journey crucial time is being wasted. Why can't Jesus leave these others and come back to them later; can't he recognise that every moment of delay threatens the very life of his child?

And as the house is finally reached his worst fears are realised; the child has died; the nightmare has come true. But Jesus is not in the least perturbed by the news; he remains completely calm and tells the weeping, wailing mourners who have gathered; ‘Do not fear. Only believe and she will be saved.’

But those who heard these words did not respond in hope and in trust but only laughed scornfully at Jesus and who must surely have been thinking ‘**What** a fool! How can he say such nonsense when we all know the child is dead? Does he honestly expect us to believe such twaddle?’

Of course, Jesus ignores their laughter, their scorn assuming he even heard it for now his purpose is single minded to prove his words and wake the child. Taking just the parents and three chosen disciples he enters the house of mourning and goes to the child laid out on her bed and gently, lovingly reaches out and takes her by the hand. The warmth of his large hand embraces that of the child’s much smaller one; the warmth of his healing love flows through her; the warmth of the spirit of life is hers once more as he calls her to get up, to rise from her bed. I wonder as she gazed up at this stranger what she saw; did she in that moment receive not just healing but a glimpse of the divine? Surely, she must have done. His touch! her hand held with such tender love in his had brought back to her all the joys and wonders of life.

At this time of isolation and self -distancing we need above all else to recognise that our hand too is held within that of Christ’s. We are **not** alone; Christ walks this strange and at times fearful journey beside us; he holds us, if we allow ourselves to recognise it, in an embrace that will **not** let us go. The words of Isaiah confirm this: ‘I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you.’ Sometimes yes, it will seem to us in our impatience to receive that consoling, strengthening touch that our Lord lingers but when that happens we must **not** allow our faith to weaken nor our trust to diminish for His coming is as sure as the sunrise.

This Holy Week we are called to walk with Christ to Jerusalem and be witness to all the events of the week culminating in His death upon the cross. Our Lord walked that journey alone; no human hand held his only the hand of God His Father and that gave Him all the courage, determination and the trust He needed to fulfil the purpose for which he had been destined since before the world began. Let us take heart and know without doubt that as we are called to walk the way of the cross at this troubled and almost surreal time God will have our hands in His and that is all we need. God alone suffices and in that certain knowledge let us too ‘get up’ and make our way with Christ to Calvary.

**Julian of Norwich** by Malcolm Guite

Show me O anchoress, your anchor hold  
Deep in the love of God, and hold me fast,  
Show me again in whose hands we are held,  
Speak to me from your window in the past,  
Tell me again the tale of Love's compassion  
For all of us who fall into the mire,  
How he is wounded with us, how his passion  
Quickens the love that haunted our desire.  
Show me again the wonder of at-one-ment  
Of Christ-in-us distinct and yet the same,  
Who makes, and loves, and keeps us in each moment,  
And looks on us with pity not with blame.  
Keep telling me, for all my faith may waver,  
Love is his meaning, only love, forever.