

by Joan Mitchell, CSJ

Open a bible at the center of your group. Place a lighted candle beside it.

**LEADER:** We enter the story world Mark's gospel creates and walk with characters who fear for their lives and for the lives of those they love.

**ALL:** Their story may be our own.

**LEADER:** We walk with those who cross the threshold of fear and speak their faith in the healing and new life Jesus promises.

**ALL:** Their faith nourishes our own.

The Hawaiian word for family is *Ohana*, the plural of *oha* (taro), the plant that provides poi, traditionally the most basic food of Hawaiians. A family includes all who come from the same root and survive on the same nourishment as well as those families take in through friendship and hospitality. Families walk together in life, link generations, care for each other. They experience fear and loss together, joy and support.

The Mexican *familia* spans generations in the Pixar film *Coco*, which takes place on *Día de las Muertos*, the Day of the Dead (All Souls Day). In the film the dead visit the living

only if their families remember and honor them with photos, food, and flowers on *ofrendas* (altars). Unremembered, the dead fade into oblivion.

Coco is the great grandmother of Miguel, a boy who wants to be a musician like her father, who supposedly abandoned the family to become a great singer. To them music is a curse. Miguel's parents and *abuela* insist he make shoes as his whole family does.

Miguel runs away, discovers in the land of the dead who his great, great grandfather really is, and learns the song his ancestor sang to Coco, when she was a child. Coco remembers her father and restores his photo on the *ofranda*. The music in Miguel brings healing to the family across generations.

What unites the two daughters in Sunday's gospel into one family is not taro root or music but faith in



Jesus. A chronic hemorrhage has isolated an older woman from her faith family that worships in the temple. An illness threatens a young girl's life and tears at her parents' hearts. Both become members of Jesus' new family, daughters of faith.

● What is the root or music that unites your family? What role does faith play?

# GOSPEL

## A woman gives witness to Jesus' healing power.

### SCENE 1: Jairus's sick daughter

**NARRATOR 1:** When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered around him. He was by the sea. Then one of the leaders of the synagogue, Jairus, came and when he saw Jesus, fell at his feet and begged him—

**JAIRUS:** My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live.

### SCENE 2: A hemorrhaging woman

**NARRATOR 1:** So Jesus went with Jairus.

**NARRATOR 2:** A large crowd followed Jesus and pressed in on him. Now there was a woman who had suffered from a flow of blood for 12 years. She had endured much under many physicians, spent all that she had without benefit, and rather grew worse. She had heard about Jesus, came up behind him in the crowd, and touched his garment.

**WOMAN:** If I but touch his garment, I will be healed.

**NARRATOR 2:** Immediately her flow of blood stopped, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her scourge. Just as immediately Jesus, aware that power had gone forth from him, turned about in the crowd.

**JESUS:** Who touched my clothes?

**DISCIPLES:** You see the crowd pressing in on you. How can you ask, "Who touched me?"

**NARRATOR 2:** Jesus looked around to see who had done it. The woman, afraid and trembling but knowing what had happened to her, came, fell before him, and told him the whole truth.

**JESUS:** Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace, and continue whole and free from your scourge.

### SCENE 3: Jesus lifts up Jairus's daughter

**NARRATOR 1:** While he was still speaking, people came from the synagogue leader's house to speak to Jairus.

**MESENTERS:** Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?

**NARRATOR 1:** Overhearing what they said, Jesus spoke immediately to the leader of the synagogue.

**JESUS:** Do not fear, only believe.

**NARRATOR 1:** Jesus allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. Entering the house, Jesus said to them—

**JESUS:** Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child has not died but sleeps.

**NARRATOR 1:** They laughed at him. Then he put them all outside, took the child's father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was. He took her by the hand and said to her—

**JESUS:** *Talitha cum!*

**NARRATOR 1:** This means, "Little girl, to you I say, arise!" Immediately the girl got up and began to walk about. She was 12 years old. At this they were overcome with amazement. Jesus strictly ordered them that no one should know this and told them to give the girl something to eat.

Mark 5.21-43

## Mark's gospel calls us beyond fear to faith and witness.

Several details invite us to make connections between the two stories in Sunday's gospel. Both are about daughters. The child is a daughter of Jairus and of the synagogue he leads. Jesus

addresses the hemorrhaging woman as daughter after she tells the whole truth of her healing. She is a daughter of his new community—a believer.

Twelve is an important number in both stories. The

child is 12 years old, an approximate age for the onset of menstruation. The woman has suffered a flow of blood for 12 years and has for these years been excluded, according to the law of Moses, from the worship of her people in the temple.

Leviticus 15.19-31 says that a flow of blood makes a woman

unclean, contaminates anyone she touches, and prevents her from entering and defiling the temple. In the case of the hemorrhaging woman, the opposite occurs. Her touch doesn't make Jesus unclean; rather Jesus heals her and makes her whole.

Mark also connects these two stories with Jesus' own story. The Greek word *mastigos*, which Mark uses to name the woman's flow of blood, labels it a *scourge*. In Acts 22.24 and Hebrews 11.36 this word refers to *floggings* or *scourgings*. The word connotes suffering like Jesus' own in his passion and death. The woman's lifeblood keeps hemorrhaging from her body just as Jesus' lifeblood pours out in his suffering and death.

**W**hile the woman's story emphasizes a long-time daily suffering, the child's story emphasizes Jesus raising her up from near death. Jesus commands her, "Arise." This is the same word that describes Jesus raising up Peter's mother-in-law and his own rising from the dead. Together the stories of the two daughters echo in ordinary people's lives Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection.

Both stories involve generations—the stories of Jairus and his blood daughter and Jesus and his faith daughter. By asking Jesus to help his daughter and trusting he can, Jairus changes his little girl's future just as Jesus'

healing transforms the woman's suffering and exclusion from the community. As a Christian, the little girl can grow up in a community that does not exclude her when she menstruates.

● **Who do you see suffering Jesus' passion today?**

● **What new life would you like to ask of Jesus for your children?**

● **What future in the Christian community do you want for your daughters?**

● **What do you make of Jesus' willingness to heal and to touch and be touched?**



**T**he gospel writer tells the stories of the two daughters together as a story within a story. In both stories the people are desperate. Jairus and his wife fear for their daughter's life. The woman with the hemorrhage despairs of ending the flow of blood. Both the desperate parents and the despairing woman respond to Jesus' healing and life-giving power with amazement.

Amazement is the threshold where faith in Jesus begins. Repeatedly Mark's gospel creates these threshold moments to call us hearers of the word to faith.

The story of the hemorrhaging woman interrupts and delays Jesus' response to Jairus. She seeks Jesus out as a last desperate act. Imagine how she feels after 12 years of losing blood and energy. Doctors have failed her. She has spent her resources. Her condition has worsened. The woman takes matters into her own hands and from behind Jesus she touches his garment, a gesture significant and symbolic.

The people for whom Mark writes in AD 70 will meet Jesus in story and sacrament, at a distance, rather than face to face like the eyewitnesses.

The woman moves from desperation to fear and trembling, to testifying to the whole truth of what has happened to her. She proclaims the good news of her healing publicly in the midst of the crowd. Her faith heals her. Jesus addresses her as daughter. She belongs to his family of faith. She is one of only four people in Mark's gospel who tell who Jesus is.

● **What is a visible sacrament of your faith as touching Jesus' garment was for the hemorrhaging woman?**

● **What witness do you give to Jesus' importance in your life?**



**M**essengers interrupt Jesus' last words to the woman healed of hemorrhage with news that Jairus's daughter had grown worse and died. The parents' worst fears have come true. Jesus invites Jairus to move from fear to faith. He heals the girl in the privacy of Jairus's home with her parents, Peter, James, and John with him. All these witnesses move from fear to overwhelming amazement. Mark suspends them at this threshold of faith and they follow Jesus' orders to tell no one.

The woman's healing is key in this story within a story. The woman who no longer has a flow of blood not only experiences awe and amazement but models the response Mark wants. In her witness Mark points to the power of people's faith in Jesus, even at a distance in time. She is an anonymous one of us who models the full step into faith and witness in the community. She is an ordinary person who speaks her faith and builds up the community in her generation. Her witness is the model Mark wants each hearer to follow.

- How has the faith testimony of others nourished your faith or the faith of your parish?
- What comments do you hear from others about the witness you give to your faith in Jesus?

## FIRST READING

### God creates all to live.

**T**he experience of exile in the 500s BC expanded and shifted Israel's images of God. The great warrior of early centuries who opened the dry path through the sea retreats and the compassionate creator who provides in abundance comes forward in the Wisdom literature—God the householder, who from the beginning sets the world on its firm foundation and gives it life.

In Sunday's first reading the writer of the Wisdom of Solomon testifies that God's generative forces enliven the world. God creates all that exists and delights in all that lives. The first chapter of Genesis with its proclamation that God's word creates and all that God makes is good comes out of this post-exilic era.

The Book of Wisdom gives practical advice about how to live. The foolish person revels in wine and pleasure, considers might the law of right, and oppresses the poor. The foolish find amusement in torturing and testing the just to see how they stand up and whether God intervenes to save them.

The wise person sees God at work in creation and alive in one's own potential for good. The author of Wisdom sees humankind made in the image of God, made for eternity and incorruption. The author reasons that a just and righteous life must last forever.

### God gives life.

God did not make death and does not delight in the death of the living. For God created all things so that they might exist. The generative forces of the world are wholesome; there is no destructive poison in them; the dominion of Hades is not on earth. For righteousness is immortal.

God created us for incorruption, and made us in the image of God's own eternity, but through the devil's envy death entered the world, and those who belong to the devil's company experience it.

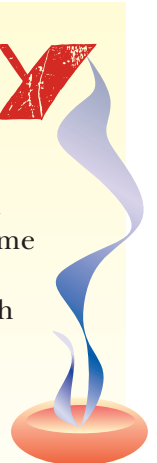
Wisdom 1.13-15; 2.23-24

- What is the earthly value of a wise and just life? The eternal value?
- How does Jewish faith in God as creator move toward belief in eternal life?

## PRAY

To conclude your reflection together on Sunday's readings, name people you know who need healing. To each name, respond—

**ALL: Giver of life, lift them up; make them whole.**



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