

Homily 13th Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year B 1st July 2018

In today's Gospel the focus is on healing. In the Jewish tradition of Jesus' time sickness and suffering were associated with sin. The illness afflicting both of these women, particularly the woman suffering from a haemorrhage would have been attributed to the sinfulness of individuals. The woman with the bleeding would have been regarded as ritually unclean and anyone who touched her would also be regarded as unclean. This is why she touches only Jesus' cloak not his hands or body and why she is so afraid when she is discovered. My western mind dismisses the idea of suffering as a punishment for sin and the concept of ritual uncleanness. But then I think of the modern idea that it's always someone's fault. The victim of some vile sexual assault is portrayed in a court "as asking for it". Or, I listen to a banking executive justifying the eviction of a farming family off land they have owned for generations as the bank simply doing what they said they would do. I hear of the treatment of the most helpless refugees. Desperate helpless people being interned in camps, children been separated from parents, people been processed "off

shore” under the pretext of stopping drownings or stopping terrorist. I realise I live in a country where our attitude to the outsider is driven more by “radio shock-jocks” than compassion or understanding. We say we are a Christian society, followers of Christ, but only if it suits us.

I look around me and see a society haemorrhaging; a society that is dying poisoned by our selfish, self-righteousness. Yet a couple of months ago Kaye and I visited Mungo in south western NSW. You may have heard of Mungo Man. I read that; *“at Mungo scientists have discovered artefacts of this ancient culture dating back over 50,000 years across the expanses of the last ice age. This makes Mungo one of the oldest places outside of Africa to have been occupied by modern humans since ancient times.”* I find it astounding that the Aboriginal people of this area can trace their heritage back 50,000 years. Yet white society often dismisses this culture as primitive with little or nothing to offer modern society. I wonder what will be left of our society in 50,000 years. Yet in my pain and confusion I recall reading about Dr Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr an Aboriginal woman elder from the Daly River region of the Northern Territory. Miriam-Rose

writes about '*dadirri*', an inner, deep listening and quiet, still awareness. She believes '*dadirri*' is a most important and unique gift. It is perhaps the greatest gift that Aboriginals can give to our fellow Australians.

She writes: '*Dadirri*' recognises the deep spring that is inside us. We call on it and it calls to us. This is the gift that Australia is thirsting for. Our Aboriginal culture has taught us to be still and to wait. We do not try to hurry things up. We let them follow their natural course - like the seasons. We watch the moon in each of its phases. We wait for the rain to fill our rivers and water the thirsty earth. When twilight comes, we prepare for the night. At dawn we rise with the sun. We are River people. We cannot hurry the river. We have to move with its current and understand its ways. We hope that the people of Australia will wait. Not so much waiting for us - to catch up - but waiting with us, as we find our place in this world.

I normally don't have long quotes in my homilies but Miriam-Rose's words seem so calming, so ancient, and so full of wisdom. I have come to realise this is how a culture lasts for 50,000 years not by science and technological advances but by listening and waiting. I

also came to realise that the society Jesus lived in is not much different to ours. We know what is best; we know who the unclean people are and how to solve their problems. I ponder would I have had the faith to believe Jesus could raise Jairus' daughter or would I have mocked Him with the rest of the crowd.

Yet the absolute thing Jesus demands is faith. He is not interested where someone fits in society, He is not concerned about their status, and He is only concerned about faith. The woman suffering from a haemorrhage had faith; "My daughter your faith has restored you to health." Jairus had faith otherwise he would not have gone to Jesus. But, notice how Jesus treats the faithless crowd, with contempt, not even allowing them to witness the miracle he is about to perform. He has no need to prove anything to them, they are condemned by their own behaviour, their own faithlessness.

When I think of my fragile faith I think of something that I call on and it calls to me. I call on it when I'm confronted with a dying patient in hospital, a husband and father with a wife and family. All I can do is be a witness to my faith, as I often say I'm just the arms and

legs, somebody else dose the talking. My faith calls me to be that witness, to talk of hope among the hopeless. My faith calls me to a deep listening, to be patient, to be still and to wait in the presence of God. My faith echoes the words of Julian of Norwich “All shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well.” I come to realise that my faith is my ‘Dadirri’. Our faith is the greatest gift we can give to our fellow Australians. Why? Because only by our actions and our faith can Jesus’ healing power transform a broken world. Who knows if we act as people of faith in 50,000 years our descendants may say of us: These were a people of great faith; we know this by their compassion towards the “outsider”.