

13th Sunday Ordinary Time      Cycle B      June 28, 2009

Two deaths this past Thursday: Michael Jackson, aged 50, in what should have been the prime of life; he should have been happy, with many friends. He dies, his face misshapen, many millions in debt, his rented home filled with statues as if to have someone around him. A sudden, mysterious passing of a sad man who once said, "I don't want to die like Elvis Presley."

Farrah Fawcett was different; she was 62, her death expected after a difficult struggle with cancer. On Tuesday, the Mass of Christian Burial for one of "Charlie's Angels" will be celebrated at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels in downtown Los Angeles. Farrah Fawcett allowed a documentary to be made of the last year of her life; in a little clip on television, she was making the Sign of the Cross. From Charlie's Angel and an unholy lifestyle to death as a devout Catholic. We all make our own particular journey to God; God works in each of our lives in unique ways.

We hear in the Book of Wisdom that "God did not make death, nor does he rejoice in the destruction of the living." And we see Jesus healing a woman and raising a girl back to life. But we know that people still get very sick, and people still die! Where is that God? Surely many, many believers prayed for Farrah Fawcett to be healed. Has God changed His divine mind about making people better? Or, does our sickness mean that we don't have enough faith, or aren't praying hard enough, or perhaps are being punished for some secret sin?

First, The Book of Wisdom is saying that God did not make spiritual death, that God made us to live forever. "God formed man to be imperishable." You and I are "imperishable" --we are not necessarily promised to be healthy or strong or rich--just imperishable. I'll take that. How about you?

Secondly, God does cure--sometimes. I have seen miraculous cures and heard of others--sometimes. I had a dinner once with a Pentecostal minister who said, "We would lay hands on people, and some of them we would raise from the dead!" And I have no reason to doubt that it was true. Some of them.

Thank God for the physical cures. They are reminders that God cares for

us, and that we need to pray for one another. We can't not pray for healing just because not every prayer is answered! That's our job, to pray! But Our Lord really wants to heal our hearts, our spirits, our souls: God wants most of all to save us for eternity. (I had the triple bypass surgery. What good is it if my heart has good arteries and the blood is flowing freely *if I don't have a loving heart? a caring heart?*) So, most of all Jesus wants us to have healthy spirits, healthy souls. Because we are imperishable! When Jesus heals the bleeding woman and says, "Your faith has saved you," the Greek word for "save" refers to both physical and spiritual life. And when Jesus says to the 12 year old "arise", the Greek word for "arise" is the same word the bible uses for the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

We naturally cry out for physical healing, but what our Lord wants most of all for us is spiritual wellbeing, that we become saints.

Farrah Fawcett stars as one of Charlie's Angels, lives an irregular lifestyle, eventually poses for a magazine that we don't have on the church bookrack. Then, she stars in "The Burning Bed," a movie about domestic violence. That movie changes Farrah Fawcett's life, and she spends her remaining years doing unpublicized charity work for the victims of domestic violence. She dies we assume, in good standing with the Church--and with Jesus. Amazing Grace! We all make our own journey.

Ten minutes or so until Holy Communion. The bleeding woman thinks, "If only I but touch his clothes!" Jairus, the synagogue official cries out, "If only Jesus can lay hands on my daughter!" In just a few moments, most of us will do far more than that: we will receive Jesus, take him in, in the form of bread and wine. What healing do you need? Is it physical? Or perhaps a healing of the spirit? Let's take a moment to pray for that quietly.