My Beloved Ones,

In this Sunday’s Gospel, St. Luke the Evangelist tells us about two miracles: the first, is the healing of the woman with the flow of blood, and the second, is resurrection of the daughter of Jairus, the ruler of a synagogue. What is especially interesting is how the details of these miracles demonstrate the truly universal message of our faith, across time, and for all human beings.

St. Luke tells us that the young girl was “…about twelve years of age, and she was dying”, while the woman also “…had a flow of blood for twelve years…” (Luke 8:42; 8:43). The importance of the number twelve in both situations is not accidental. In Jewish Law, twelve is the age where a young girl becomes an adult in the eyes of her community. In the case of the bleeding woman, twelve years emphasizes the terrible physical and emotional pain she suffered.

Therefore, it is not surprising that instead of approaching Jesus, she “…came up behind him, and touched the fringe of his garment; and immediately her flow of blood ceased” (Luke 8:44). Even in the middle of a large crowd, Jesus can feel that some power has left Him, and when many deny touching Him, “…the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling, and falling down before him declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed. And he said to her, ‘Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace’” (Luke 8:47-48).

In the meantime, messengers arrive to inform Jesus and Jairus that Jairus’s daughter has died. Jesus, however, knows that Jairus showed the same kind of faith, and so He tells Jairus, “Do not fear; only believe, and she shall be well” (Luke 8:51). Jesus enters the crowded home, but permits only the girl's parents (as well as Peter, James & John) to remain with Him. Then, He takes hold of the child’s hand, before telling her to arise, and instructing her amazed parents that she should be given something to eat (Luke 8:54-56).

My dear brothers and sisters, I ask that we take our minds back several weeks, to the Gospel for the 3rd Sunday of Luke, when Jesus raised up the Widow of Nain’s Son. We read that the boy was the only son of his mother, and now, in today’s Gospel we see that Jairus’s child was in fact his only daughter (Luke 8:41). Such a comparison also does not seem accidental, and I believe that St. Luke wishes to draw our attention to the universality of our faith.

Of course, we recall that the death of the Widow’s Son was especially tragic, because he was responsible for taking care of his mother, in a time and place when women’s roles
were different than today. Though it is never said, it was understood to the reader of Luke’s time, that the Law also placed restrictions concerning purity. According to the Law, the woman with the flow of blood would have been considered unclean for over a decade. We can understand her desire then, not to be seen, but only to touch our Lord’s garments. Equally, by touching Jairus’s dead daughter, (whose name is not written) Jesus is also showing us something about the difference between the letter, and the spirit of the Law.

It is also moving that Christ calls the healed woman “Daughter”, before He goes on to raise Jairus’s daughter. By honoring their faith, and treating them no differently than the Widow’s Son, Christ demonstrates, once and for all that, Christianity is a faith which treats all people as icons of God, reminding us of St. Paul’s words that, “...there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28).

+ALEXIOS
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