

Church of the Good Shepherd and St. John the Evangelist

4 Pentecost
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Fr. Bill McGinty

“Talitha Cum”

There are only three times that the Gospels record Jesus raising someone from the dead. Today's Gospel, the story of Jairus' daughter is one of them. The story appears in the fifth chapter of Mark's Gospel. It is unusual because the one requesting the healing is a Synagogue leader. Although the story is relatively short, it is packed with dialogue. There is what Jairus says, there is what the people around the house say and there is what Jesus says.

Ultimately it is only the two words that Jesus utters, which matter: “Talitha cum.” “Little girl get up!” All the weeping and wailing of the crowd matters nothing. In the end it is Jesus who brings life.

I have read a lot of books in the last few weeks which tell me that we live in a Post Modern Era. Scholars tell us and insist that it is an age of uncertainty, marked by constant change, doubt, and disbelief. They say people and the younger generation in particular are disillusioned with science, government, religion and politics and are looking for new answers, new meaning in a world where everything now has equal weight.

There is, according to Post Modernists, no such thing as ultimate truth, but there is relative truth, meaning truth depends on your situation. There are no universal laws and values; in other words not everyone can be held accountable and when it comes to religion, it does not matter which one you belong to, Buddhist, Hindu, Islam, or Native American, they are all the same and it is a matter of taste.

I equate this type of theology with running a 26 mile marathon in the Olympic Games, only to run into the stadium for the final lap to be told that all the medals will be awarded to the last three competitors in the race because they have some disadvantages.

Trying to argue with a Post Modernist is like trying to grasp a cloud. They won't accept that anything is valid or true and their main reply to everything is: “Well, that depends.”

As you all know by now I am not of that school. I believe the earth is round; science is good. The truth is discoverable. Hard work should be rewarded. We are not all equal in the sense that some people work at being better. I believe in history and don't like seeing it changed. I like competitive sports and am in favor of the first passed the post. I love politics and believe politicians are like the rest of us, good, bad and indifferent. I believe some things are art and some things are stupid adults throwing junk on a wall. I like music you can follow notes with. I like amateur sports and believe the Olympics should be amateur. I believe in families, courts, the law, punishment, prisons and the death sentence for certain crimes especially committed against children, providing it is carried out in 48 months. I believe in wrong and right, good and bad, grace and evil and if necessary peace

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and war. I believe in the widening of understanding through knowledge. I believe in the growth of understanding education offers.

I believe in sin and I believe in virtue. I believe in the fundamental goodness of man, but also his capacity for evil and horror. I believe in vice and that it leads to perdition. I believe in grace and think it creates goodness. I believe in Angels and I have worked with a few but loved only one. I believe in the power of a community to effect change. I believe that death, a natural death after a long good life, can be a good thing.

I believe in the power of love and its ability to transform us. I believe in the word of God and that he has ultimately revealed that word to us in the person of Jesus Christ his Son. I believe that Jesus Christ is the manifestation of our God; I don't believe all religions are the same. I believe some religions are sincere but still wrong. I believe Jesus raised a little girl from the dead in today's Gospel with two words: "Talitha Cum!"

I am not the first one to sit down and write out a list of my beliefs. Christians have been writing down their beliefs since the first century. Maybe they did so because people were always asking them: "What do you believe?"

It is a good exercise and one that we should all engage in from time to time. Sit down with a legal pad any day this week and write a long list of what you truly believe.

I am always fascinated when some of our young people openly tell us: "I don't know if I believe in God." I wonder if they say the same thing at home and what their parents reply. If you don't believe in God then you can't believe in Jesus. For Jesus was not a person who woke up one day and decided to go for a walk where he would teach lots of people, heal the sick, the lame and the blind, create cast out many demons and raise three people from the dead.

Jesus was the Creator of the Universe come to live briefly among us. In doing so he made sense of our existence on this small planet on the edge of the Milky Way Galaxy.

Considering that at the last count there are some 200 billion Galaxies, each with some trillion stars each, then in the realm of things God coming to visit is pretty significant.

Personally, I find it so inspiring that if I had been around in Palestine 2006 years ago, I would have dropped everything and followed him around for three years just to hear what he had to say. Alas, I never found out about Jesus till I was around seven and about six years later I dropped everything and went off to find out what he had to say.

I know many guys who will read up on everything they can when a new computer or laptop comes on the market. They will tell you that you really must have 1000 ram and at least 100GB if you want to do serious work, but if you are into graphics and media you really want the Apple 1 GH or maybe the bigger Power book Series.

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This is all very fine and useful but when it comes to our faith and our knowledge of Jesus, the Gospels and our creeds, why do we think we can run our faith on 1.5 Ram and precious little input?

In computer language trash in, trash out. If you don't put work into what you believe you are going to crash.

Christians shouldn't be surprised Jesus raised this little girl from the dead today. If you know about Jesus you know who he truly is.

It is time to plug in the laptop of our life and download some updates. If you are still surviving on what you learned about Jesus in school, your faith is seriously at risk. You need to join one of the courses we will offer next winter.

For today read again this Gospel and remember Jesus' words "Little girl, get up."

It is time for all of us to get and shout: "I believe! I believe! I believe Lord Jesus help my unbelief."

Amen+