

2018 13th SUNDAY

During my years as a Marist Brother in Kiribati we lived next door to a large Community of Religious Sisters- most of whom were i-Kiribati. They were beautiful neighbours and were forever spoiling us with gifts of food. A Sister I especially loved was Sister Talitha.

Sister Talitha was tiny; just a wee dot of a woman but filled with laughter and joy. I once asked her about her name. She told me it was a name she had received from the Sisters when she received her Religious Habit. Reverend Mother certainly must have had a sense of humour. As we learnt in today's Gospel 'Talitha' in Hebrew means "Little One". It was how Jesus addressed the little girl lying dead on her bed. "Talitha- I tell you to get up."

We do not know what became of Jairus' little daughter. But I am picking that she would have been like Sister Talitha- filled with laughter and joy. The little girl in passing through death had experienced the wondrous love with which we will all be embraced with as we meet God. I think we can safely guarantee that the little girl, for the rest of her life, would have had no fear of death. She would have lived with the wondrous expectancy of sharing the glory of God in life beyond death.

Today's Readings help clear up some very common misconceptions about death.

Last week, for example, seven people were killed in a tragic motor accident at Waverley. Included in the dead were a new-born baby and a 7 year old girl.

Do we say: "This was God's Will- part of God's plan for the baby and the young girl."?

The answer is "No" we mustn't say that. Such a response is wrong. God did not organise the accident or want the accident. It was not the Will of our All-loving God.

The Jairus story shows this.

Jesus was the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. It was utterly impossible for Jesus to act contrary to the Will of the Father. God is One making disunity within the Trinity an impossibility.

In raising the little girl from the dead Jesus was proclaiming to all people- then and to come- that the death of Jairus' little girl was not the Will of the

Father. It was the Will of the Father for the little girl to live. Her dying was not the Father's Will.

To say therefore that the death of that new-born baby and the 7 year old girl at Waverley was the Will of God is to make a monster out of God.

This teaching is reinforced by our 1st Reading from the Book of Wisdom: "Death is not God's doing. God takes no pleasure in the extinction of the living. God has created all people to be."

It is false to say that everything that happens in the world is God's Will. Sin and evil are not God's Will and neither is death. Death came into the world as a result of sin but not as God's punishment for sin. As the Book of Wisdom so aptly put it: "God has created all people to be."

In raising the little girl from the dead Jesus enabled her to be- to become the full human person she was created to become.

We see here the evil in Abortion. At the first moment of conception, God instils within a tiny foetus human personhood. All that is needed for the tiny foetus to thrive and to become the person God wills the tiny one to become is to be fed and kept safe. No one has the right to thwart that little one from becoming a full human person.

It is God's Will that we become the fullest human person we can become. None of us are finished products. I know that one day I will become feeble and be reliant on the goodness of others to support me. I will not enjoy this time but I know it will be for my spiritual good. I will learn qualities at that time that I have not got at present. I will become more grateful, more loving, more ready to come into the presence of God, Who is all love.

Ours is a God of life, a God of surprises Who changes mourning into dancing.

Jairus would have seen this as once again he hugged his beloved little daughter in his arms.

The little girl Jesus called "Talitha" would have understood this as she looked out onto the world with new eyes and deeper vision.

Today's story reminds us that accidents like that at Waverley are not God's Will. It also tells us that Jesus brings light and life and will be with those who are mourning giving them powerful graces to cope; inspiring people to hug them and console them.

And as for those two tiny ones who will never become the persons they were created to become? What of them? We leave them in the arms of our God, a God of love and of surprises.