

## Words to Ponder: *Messages from the Pulpit*

Readings for Oct 10, from *the Word among us*

*28th Sunday in Ordinary Time: 2 Kings 5:14-17; Psalm 98; 2 Timothy 2:8-13; Luke 17:11-19*

### **10.9.10: Stella Maris Chapel... Father Ralph Jones** [audio recording]

“Sing to the Lord a new song for he has done wondrous deeds. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

“Amen.

“Yes, the good God Almighty has indeed done wondrous deeds. [Moreover,] since he is as the Bible tells us—the same, yesterday, today, and forever—we can expect to see, to experience, and many times to be part of, his miraculous delivering power in our lives and the lives of those that are very near and dear to us. It’s an ongoing testimony to the reality of God and to the truth of his word.

“Come with me now to the east....”

Father Ralph then shared fourteen healing anecdotes depicting this Sunday’s readings.

#### **First**

“Herman was a car mechanic. He woke up one morning and wasn’t quite himself. [He] didn’t really feel that ill enough to stay home and not go to the garage, [so] he got in the car and cruised off. The closer he got to the work, the more ill he became. [It] felt [as if] there was an elephant sitting on his chest. [He] had a very difficult time breathing, [so] he got on his cell phone and relayed this to his boss who in horror said, ‘Get yourself quickly to the ER! Forget your work today! Go to the ER!’

“He [went] to the ER and [on entering collapsed] with a fatal heart attack. [The medical staff picked] him up. The signs [said he was] dead; but they [took] him into the ER, put those electrodes on him, and [tried to revive him] for about twenty minutes [to no avail].

“The [ER staff] called the head doctor, [who came down to] certify that [Herman] was dead [and proceeded to leave].

“[As the nurses began [the procedure] to prepare [Herman’s] body [for] the morgue, [the doctor] swore he heard a voice.

“Get back in there and try one more time.’

“[The doctor] thought, *It must be my imagination or my desire that somehow this guy [could] be revived. He’s dead.*

“[Nevertheless, as] he proceeded down the hall, he [heard] the voice again.

“Get back into the ER and try one more time.’

“Well, [the doctor] thought. *I have nothing to lose. They’ll probably think I’m an idiot.*

“[Regardless, the doctor] went back [into the ER where] the nurse, [surprised to see him, asked], ‘What are you doing?’

“I’ve got to try to revive him one more time.’

“But he’s dead!’

“I know, but I’ve got to do it.’

“[The doctor put the paddles on the dead man’s body.] He tried and nothing happened, tried again and [heard the man cough] a little. Pretty soon Herman... got his normal breath [and] his blood pressure back. And he lived!

“[The doctor-- a born-again Christian believing in the power of prayer and of medicine—was so impressed] that he included this story in his book, *A Doctor Encounters the Raising of the Dead.*

“God still raises people from the dead.”

## **Second**

“I used to be a consultant in the emergency room. I’m not a doctor. No, I’m not a quack either. I was a clinical social worker at Madigan Army Medical Center [where] I spent eight years... in the ER on Friday nights. I also gave seminars to the doctors on... stress management, one of my fields of specialty.

“[One noontime, I made a presentation] to the family practice residents. [In] that delivery I said, ‘[You can] be sure [that] your life will be ambushed sooner or later.’

“I wondered, *Why did I say that?* ‘cause it wasn’t in my script....”

“A couple of days later in the ER, I [overheard] some of the doctors talking about Dr. Slattery [who’d been diagnosed with] melanoma stage three. That’s cancer. I didn’t know what it was; but the way they were talking, it sounded very serious to me.

“[I also didn’t know Dr. Slattery personally; but when] we got a little break in the evening, I [approached] one of the doctors. ‘Tell me [about Dr. Slattery’s] melanoma.’

“‘It’s cancer. [The doctor has] stage three... which is pretty serious, [since] there’s lymph node involvement. [Do] you know [Dr. Slattery]?’

“‘No.’

“‘Well, he was in your class.’

“I never [got] a chance to meet any of the students, but the Lord put him on my heart. I [had no idea] where he was with God or if Jesus was real to him or not, [but] I felt compelled—like the doctor in my first story—to write him a card.

Dear Dr. Slattery,

I’ve got a few things to tell you. Please listen. One, you’re no longer the doctor. You’re the patient.

“Doctors make very poor patients. I think you know that. They do. They don’t follow rules.

Two, you’re a doctor; and you know there’s healing in medicine. Otherwise, you wouldn’t be practicing it, [so] look for some healing in medicine and do whatever your physicians... recommend for your treatment. Three, [the same way] there are laws of science, there’s a God who reigns and rules in the lives and affairs of men and women....

[For this reason,] my prayer group [and I] will be [interceding on your behalf], expecting and praying for a miracle.

Your friend in Christ,  
Colonel Jones

“I was afraid to mail that letter ‘cause I thought, *Well, they might think I’m a religious nut—I guess that’s what I am—and terminate my consultations there.* But they didn’t. I never heard a word.

“About two months later, one of the doctors [happened to ask me], ‘Colonel, did you ever hear what happened to Dr. Slattery?’

“‘No, I never did.’

“‘Well, he read your card to all of us [after] the surgery. [His] melanoma [wasn’t] stage three at all. It was one.’

“God performed a miracle.

“We are experienced in some of the greatest miracles of God, and the greatest ones are coming to believe in God—to see him as [our] lord, savior, [and] king—the one who died for [us].”

### **Third**

“A [woman who’d] had an abortion [was referred to me].... I didn’t want to see her, but I had to in all charity.

“[The woman] rattled on and on and on. Pretty soon she told me [about the] abortion and that, [as she’d] left the abortion clinic in Tacoma, someone on the sidewalk had pushed [a] little pamphlet to her, [which she’d] put [in] her purse and [hadn’t] read until a couple of weeks [before coming to see me].

“[The pamphlet] was on the reality of God and Jesus, [so] she told me, ‘I don’t even really know if there is a God. There might be. I don’t know.’

“‘I believe in God,’ [I said]. ‘I don’t need to prove him to you. God is big enough. If he’s real, he’ll prove himself to you as your lord, your savior, your king, your healer.’

“‘How can that happen?’

“‘Well, first, we have to say a little prayer together.... Do you want to say that prayer?’

“‘[Sure.] What have I got to lose?’

“‘You’ve got nothing to lose and everything to gain. Say this after me, “God, if you’re real, make yourself known to me.... I’ll turn my life over to you, and I will serve you.”’

“Then she got serious and said, ‘Colonel, I’ve got another worry. A more practical one.’

“‘What’s that?’

“‘I’ve got to go out in the field next week, and I’m afraid I may be raped by some of the men.’

“‘Well, God can protect you. We’ll say a prayer. We will pray that you [won’t] go out in the field or, if you [do, that] no one will lay a hand on you.... [And, remember], I’m here every Friday night. You don’t need an appointment. I look forward to talking with you again, if you’d like to see me.’

“I thought I’d never see her again, really. Several... weeks went by, and I practically forgot this [woman] until the receptionist said, ‘Colonel, there’s someone ... waiting... to see you.’

"[The woman] had a smile on her face that would take an undertaker a month to take it off. She was so joyful and gleeful [that] she was chattering all over the place....

"Well, tell me," [I said]. "When we talked last time, we prayed that you would be safe and... nothing would happen. Did you go out in the field?"

"Yes [and] no.'

"Wait a minute. You either did or you didn't.'

"Well, listen to me. I became the colonel's driver because [his driver] was ill.... I drove the colonel... to [and from] the field [every day], so I [slept] in my own bed [every night].... '

"Then [the woman] got very serious. 'Colonel, I've got something else to tell you, but I'm afraid to tell you.'

"Trust me. What is it?"

"Do you know the main PX on the post?"

"Sure. I shop there a lot.'

"You know the parking lot that's on the right side?"

"Yes.'

"I take the army bus there 'cause I don't have a vehicle. [After] shopping on Saturday, [I went] over [to] the drinking fountain, and someone tapped me on the shoulder. I looked around, [but] no one [was] there.... I bent... to get some water again, and the same thing [happened]. [Only] this time, the bus was blowing the horn, [so] I [ran] across the lot [and] quickly [boarded] the bus. [I took] my seat, and [then] I saw Jesus walking by the bus. I *do* believe.'

"That was the end of my consultation with [the woman]. I referred her to family practice for health aid, [and she didn't come back again].

"Now, people *do* get healed.

"In our first reading [, we [heard about Naaman, the army commander who] was moving on the faith of his [wife's] slave."

[The girl, knowing about Elisha's healing powers, had suggested to her master's wife that Naaman could seek out Elisha to be cleansed of his leprosy.]

“The girl knew the prophet, and the reality of [the] God of Israel, so the [man agreed to go] there and let that prophet pray for [him just as] the paralytic in the New Testament [had] moved on the faith of his friends.”

[Naaman stopped at Elisha’s door, but the prophet didn’t come out to greet him. Naaman had anticipated that Elisha would step outside, invoke God, and cure him on the spot (Lk. 5:9-11). Instead, Naaman was offended to have been given a message secondhand.]

“The prophet [sent his servant with a message to Naaman: ‘Go wash seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will heal, and you will be clean.’ (Lk. 5:10)].

“[Naaman] rejected that [directive]. But, [as] he started to leave, one of his servants [asked], ‘If he’d asked you to do something pompous, would you have done it?’

“‘Yes.’

“‘Well, then, for goodness sake, go... dunk [yourself] in the water seven times.’

“He did, and... he [was healed].

“Sometimes we move into the miracle of God through the faith of another, and our faith encounter with God [brings] us to him as we wrestle [to learn] the truth....

“Now, in [today’s] gospel reading, ten lepers [approached Jesus for a miracle; but only one gave thanks and praise. In] my priestly experience, [I’ve learned] that, [of the] people who get miracles, [few return to give thanks and praise and share their stories].”

#### **Fourth**

“[Occasionally, when I substituted at John Paul High School (JP II), I celebrated] the Mass for the deaf... [at the chapel there. One time, after] the Mass [was] over, someone [came] up to me.

“‘My cousin has testicular cancer. Could you pray for him?’

“‘Yes. I have my St. Peregrine relic with me. A first-class relic of the saint of [those afflicted with] cancer. Have him come forward....’

“I prayed with him [that day, and then] I never heard a thing.

“Months later I was at Fruit King. It’s a Hispanic market where you can [buy] discounted vegetables and [such] and, [while there, a woman recognized me].

“‘Father, do you [celebrate Mass at the JP II] chapel?’

“Yes....’

“Did you ever hear what happened [to the young man you prayed for]?’

“No.’

“He was cured [from] cancer. It disappeared.

“Most people don’t come back to tell you, [but] God heals through people praying for you. God heals at Lourdes, for example. Miracles are still happening there.”

### **Fifth**

“[Stage] four cancer [is] another way of saying you’re about ready to depart, [so] put your affairs in order [because] this side of a miracle, you’re dead.

“[The father of a priest I know traveled from Nuevo Laredo, Mexico to Lourdes last year.] He... didn’t notice anything [when he first got home, but] he’s [now] cancer-free. God did what the doctors could not do.”

### **Sixth**

“I know a lady [who] brought a Yorkshire terrier to be prayed for that had cancer. That dog was [then taken] to San Antonio, and [neither] the vet [nor] the machines could find [any] cancer.”

### **Seventh**

“I know of another lady [with a dog]. I never saw the lady, but I saw the card with the testimony she wrote to me.

I brought my tumorous dog into the chapel. There was no priest [there], but I prayed; and the tumors have disappeared.

### **Eighth**

“[With] the St. Peregrine novena, I’ve seen ongoing miracles. One of them was a lady who had cataracts in both eyes. That isn’t life-threatening; but if you don’t have them taken care of, you go blind. In parts of the world, it’s the number one cause of blindness. That was on a Sunday. Wednesday, she went to the doctor. While she was... waiting... to have him make the final check on her eyes before the surgery, everything became brighter around her. When he examined her eyes, there were no cataracts there. None whatsoever.”

## **Ninth**

"I'll never forget the man at our mission. He had one leg shorter than the other. As a result of that, he had quite a lot of pain in his back. It took a long time for [the doctors] to figure out what was the trouble. His body was out of alignment.

I was having a healing service there. [After] the service... he was still sitting in his pew, so I said, 'Timothy, come forward. God's going to heal you.'

"He was embarrassed to come forward, [but] I had him [stretch his leg across] another chair..., so I could pray over it.

"I'm not a healer. God is. Let's make that very clear. You must have faith to believe and expect God to do what no one else can do."

## **Tenth**

"I'll never forget the lady who could hardly walk up the steps of our large adoration chapel. Out of breath. Finally, she got to me.

"Father, I've come to thank Jesus. I got my liver transplant. You said in one of your homilies [that] God could heal you at the last minute, and he did. I've come back to thank the Lord."

## **Eleventh**

"Now, [about] heart dysfunctions. The homeschoolers used to come [to a special Mass] on first Fridays.... [One of those times as we were going to lunch after] Mass, one of [the boys] looked at [his watch] and said, 'Mary's seeing the heart doctor at one o'clock.'

"[For] what?' I asked.

"The doctors in Corpus [say] that she has a serious heart condition.'

"[So I told him,] 'The Bible says, *Pray always. Pray calm.* The Bible says, *Where you two agree as touching anything on earth, then with my father in heaven, join hands.*'

"We prayed, [and I... quoted from] the book of Psalms. [One] translation... reads, *My heart is fixed*; another translation, *My heart is steadfast.*

"I told [him] to pray, [adding] that most of the time we never find out [if our prayers are answered]. Half the people don't come back [to] tell you.

"[That day at] four o'clock, [Mary] called me. [The doctors] could find nothing wrong with her heart....

“God’s miracles and healing [happen all the time].”

## **Twelfth**

“I’ll never forget the [woman who’d] come [to church] Sunday nights.... She was a basket case of worry. She had no job... and very limited money. The mortgage company was about... to repossess her house, and she was about [to lose everything]. Boy, that’s frightening!

“[My prayer group and] I prayed for her every time she [visited the church].

“I’ll never forget the night she came [to share her good news]. She also had that smile that takes an undertaker a month to take off. She was so joyful and gleeful... [that she’d gotten a fulltime] job [with] medical coverage.”

“[The woman said, ‘Father, [you’re not going to] believe this.... The mortgage company called [to say that they’d] rolled back what I owed them [and that I should just] continue [making payments].... They didn’t repossess my home!’

“God’s miracles are real today. They still happen. They happen. They happen.

“[Finally,] I’ll just tell you... quickly—I don’t want to stay over—about [two more miracles] that [happened] at this very chapel.”

## **Thirteenth**

“Tomorrow [a couple will] come to the chapel. [The wife is] very much with child....

“[The couple] was [initially] referred [here] by someone [who, like them,] had [been unable to.. conceive until they came here for prayer].

“I gave a prophecy over their child—I didn’t know if it was [I] or the Lord—but I told [the wife], ‘You’re going to have a son.’

“[The couple is so happy!]”

## **Fourteenth**

“And [then there’s little] Cooper... from Victoria....

“About a week [after visiting here for the first time, Cooper’s grandparents] called and told me they liked the chapel.

“Then about a week or two later, [the grandfather] called [again].

“Father, we’ve got a problem.... [My] twenty-one-month-old grandson... can’t walk, [and] the doctors can’t figure out why.’

“I said, ‘Bend over now. Touch your ankles, [and] we will pray. There’s no distance in prayer. God’s a healer. He’s not dead; he’s alive.’

“I don’t know what I prayed. I just prayed.

“A week or two later, [the grandfather called]. He [was] ecstatic.

“‘I went to a family gathering for my son,’ [he told me], ‘and little Cooper was there. He was running all over. You can’t keep up with him!’

“[The grandparents brought Cooper] to the chapel. I hadn’t [met] Cooper [until then].

“At the end of Mass, I had [the grandfather] give that little testimonial.

## **Finally**

“Well, time is running out. We can talk about more [miracles], [but] do you get the message? Do you understand the gospel readings [from] today?

“God is *real*. Miracles are *real*. God [doesn’t play favorites]. [He’s] bigger than any problem you could possibly face or endure. He said, ‘Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I *will* answer you and show you marvelous things you know not of.’

“Yes. That responsorial psalm verse spelled it all out—didn’t it? The Lord has revealed to the nations his saving power.

“Amen!”

*Lord, wipe away every sin and tear down every barrier. Unite us all in you. Let nothing divide us. We will never forget what you have done for us (the Word among us, October 2010, p. 34).*