

June 28, 2009

Bubba was working on his farm one day when a black sedan pulled up in front of the house. Bubba went over, and big guy in a suit got out of the car.

“Can I help you?” Bubba asked.

“I am agent with Federal Drug Enforcement Administration,” the man said. “I have come to check all your fields for illegal crops.”

“O.K.,” Bubba said. “But whatever you do, don’t go in that hay field over there.”

The man turned to Bubba, and he whipped out a badge with a federal I.D. card. “Sir,” he said, “I am an agent with the federal government. I have the authority and the power to look anywhere I want to look.”

With that, the man went directly to the fenced in field. Half the hay had been cut, and half the field had shoulder-high grass. The agent made his way into the tall grass.

Suddenly, the agent burst out of the grass, running as hard as he could toward the fence. Seconds later, Bubba’s prize bull burst out of the hay, chasing the agent and gaining on him with every step.

Bubba ran over the fence and standing on it, began to yell, “YOUR BADGE! SHOW HIM YOUR BADGE!”

In today’s gospel, there are two healing stories: Jarius’ daughter and the woman with a hemorrhage. The second story is strangely sandwiched within the first. I believe there is a message here.

Jesus could heal. He could heal and forgive sins with authority, and His authority does not come from the federal government. It comes from God in heaven. Jarius – a wealthy, powerful synagogue official -- evidently believes in Jesus’ authority as well. Jarius goes and summons Jesus to come to his house to heal his daughter. Jesus, despite His divine authority, submits and goes with Jarius.

On the way, a poor woman who had spent all of her savings trying to be healed of her hemorrhage had the same faith in the authority of Jesus. Now, a hemorrhage for a Jewish woman in those days meant much more than a physical impairment, much more than just constant bleeding. It meant she may have been cut off from society, unclean and impure. In her mind if she could just reach out and touch Him, touch the hem of His garment, she would be saved. What faith.

The way these two stories are sandwich together tells us that Jesus has power, Jesus has authority. Jesus can save the rich and the powerful AND He can save the poor and the outcast. People can bring us Jesus, or we can seek Him out ourselves.

Jesus is present in the Eucharist, but He is also present right here among us, His church gathered together to praise and worship Him. If you turn right now and look at the person beside you, you are looking at Jesus. Reach out and touch that person. Can you feel it? Can you feel Jesus?