We come together to celebrate the 13th Sunday in Ordinary Time. Today’s readings deal with topics that most of us, and perhaps people everywhere, would rather avoid. The readings deal with sickness and death.

Our first reading leads us to the Gospel’s healing stories by proclaiming that “God did not make death, nor does he rejoice in the destruction of the living. For he fashioned all things that they might have being.” While we think of death and sickness as part of life they were really not part of God’s original plan. God planned that all things should be good and then Adam and Eve committed a great sin; a sin that shook the heavens and the earth. It was a demand for free will. Our loving God gave us free will.

Last Sunday Jesus scolded his fearful disciples saying, “Do you not yet have faith?” Next Sunday, Jesus is “unable to perform any mighty deed” because of his home-towners “lack of faith.”

Our Gospel reading today tells of a synagogue official named Jairus who pleads with Jesus to cure his daughter, who is at the point of death. While on the way to the official’s house, a woman afflicted with hemorrhages for twelve years came through the large crowd that is following Jesus, and touches his cloak. She is instantly cured. Jesus, aware that power had gone out of him, asks who has touched my clothes. The woman in fear and trembling tells him that it was she who touched him. Jesus says to her, daughter, your faith has saved you. Go in peace and be cured of your affliction. While he was still speaking, people from the synagogue official’s house arrived and announce that his daughter has died. Jesus says to the official “do not be afraid, just have faith.” Upon arrival at the official’s house Jesus takes the child by the hand and says to her, “little girl, I say to you, arise”! The girl, a child of twelve, stands and walks around. Jesus gives strict orders that no one should know about what he did, and adds that the girl should be given something to eat.

As Christians we are all called on to live our lives in imitation of Jesus. This same Jesus, now Risen from the dead, who reached out with compassion and with power to heal and to give life is still with each one of us today. Gathered in his name, we pray that in our moment of affliction, we too will hear his words, “Do not be afraid; just have faith.”

We are called Christians for a reason, and the reason is that we have the duty and responsibility to take care of humanity through compassion and forgiveness. We have the task, not only to promote life, but to choose life. The indelible mark of Baptism, this great gift of faith, should lead us to love and care for one another as sons and daughters of the one true God. And with faith in Jesus, we don’t really have to worry. Jesus will remind us that we must be concerned for those who are less fortunate than we. We are encouraged to help others grow in faith by promoting, preserving and choosing life over death. We are reminded that faith, not magic formulas, heals.
Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue came to Jesus in desperation because his daughter was dying. The woman who had hemorrhages for 12 years and had spent all her money on doctors and medicines heard of Jesus and decided to put all her trust in Jesus. Jesus rewards both Jairus and the woman with a miracle because they had great faith in him. Jesus has the power to heal and restore anyone who has faith. Because of his love for these two seekers of Jesus’ power, Jesus went beyond his culture’s barrier and granted their requests.

Like Jesus, we are called to help others - even to the point of going beyond our cultural barriers. We are called to choose life. And to choose life, according to St. John-Paul II, “involves rejecting every form of violence: the violence of poverty and hunger, which oppresses many human beings; the violence of armed conflict which does not resolve division and tension and the violence of mindless damage to the natural environment.”

In this Eucharistic celebration today, we enact a great drama of life and death. In recalling and re-enacting Jesus’ death and resurrection, we enter more fully into God’s life and are empowered through our faith to proclaim the joy of today’s gospel.

Jesus is here today, and we have a chance to touch, not his clothes, but his very body.

Let us put our heart and soul into that privilege.