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Father Cantalamessa on Revitalizing Youth

Pontifical Household Preacher on Sunday's Gospel Passage

ROME, JUNE 30, 2006 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org))- Here is a translation of a commentary by Capuchin Father Raniero Cantalamessa, preacher to the Pontifical Household, on this Sunday's Gospel passage.

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Little girl, arise!

The passage of this Sunday's Gospel is made up of scenes that occur rapidly in different places.

First of all is the scene on the lakeshore. Jesus is surrounded by a crowd when a man falls down at his feet and begs him: "My daughter is at the point of death. Please, come lay your hands on her that she may get well and live." Jesus leaves his half-finished address and goes to the man's home.

The second scene takes place on the road. A woman who suffered from hemorrhage, went up behind Jesus to touch his garment and felt she is cured.

While Jesus was speaking with her, someone arrived from Jairus' house to tell him: "Your daughter has died; why trouble the teacher any longer?" Jesus, who heard everything, said to the ruler of the synagogue: "Do not be afraid; just have faith."

And next comes the crucial scene, in Jairus' house.

There was great confusion, people weeping and shouting, which is understandable given the death of the adolescent which had just occurred.

"So he went in and said to them, 'Why this commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but asleep.' ... Then he put them all out. He took along the child's father and mother and those who were with him and entered the room where the child was.

"He took the child by the hand and said to her, 'Talitha kum,' which means, 'Little girl, I say to you, arise!'

"The girl, a child of twelve, arose immediately and walked around. ... He gave strict orders that no one should know this and said that she should be given something to eat" (Mark 5:39-43).

The Gospel passage suggests an observation. The degree of historicity and reliability of the Gospels is again continually discussed. We recently witnessed the attempt to put at the same level, as if it had the same authority, the four canonical Gospels and the apocryphal gospels of the second and third centuries.

However, this attempt is simply absurd, and it also shows a good deal of bad faith. The apocryphal gospels,

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especially those of Gnostic origin, were written several generations later by persons who had lost all contact with the events, and who, moreover, were not in the least interested in making history, but in putting on Christ's lips the teachings of their own schools.

The canonical Gospels, on the contrary, were written by eyewitnesses of the events or persons who had been in contact with eyewitnesses.

Mark, whose Gospel we are reading this year, was in close relationship with the Apostle Peter, of whom he refers many episodes that had him as protagonist.

This Sunday's passage gives us an example of that historical character of the Gospels. The clear portrait of Jairus and his anguished request for help; the episode of the woman they meet on the way to her home; the messengers' skeptical attitude toward Jesus; Christ's tenacity; the atmosphere of the people mourning for the dead girl; Jesus' command mentioned in the original Aramaic language; Jesus' moving concern that the resurrected girl be given something to eat. All makes one think of an eyewitness' account of the event.

Now, a brief application of Sunday's Gospel to life: There is not only the death of the body but also the death of the heart.

Death of the heart exists when one lives in anxiety, discouragement and chronic sadness. Jesus' words "Talitha koum," Little girl, arise, are not addressed only to dead boys and girls, but also to living boys and girls.

How sad it is to see young people sad. And there are very many around us. Sadness, pessimism, the desire not to live, are always bad things, but when one sees or hears young people express them, the heart is even more oppressed.

In this connection, Jesus also continues today to resurrect dead boys and girls. He does so with his word, and also by sending them his disciples who, in his name, and with his very love, repeat to today's young people that cry of his: "Talitha koum," youth, arise! Live again!

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