

He calmed the Sea of Galilee last week. Now Jesus goes to people like us. Normal on the outside, but maybe with oceans of inner problems. A woman bleeding blood and money. A panicky parent. A dead little girl. Later to lepers and many public sinners.

These wonderful healings show Jesus' astonishing ability to give life. And today's Gospel gives us a special insight into part of the reason he had so much power. Among many other amazing abilities, Jesus knows, very well, how to ... disregard.

It was taboo for a lady with a blood problem to touch a man, let alone a rabbi. He disregards it. The crowd runs to tell him the little girl is dead. He disregards them. Mourners ridicule him for saying the girl is asleep. He disregards it.

If you take everything serious, the details will eat you alive. You'll never have important time and energy for important things. Wise people know how to disregard. Imperfect apostles. Disregard it. Fear he'd die on a cross before the kingdom came. Disregard it. Public wisdom saying: "No prophet can come from Nazareth. We know who you are, you're not anyone". Disregard it. Relatives convinced he was beside himself. Disregard them. The very sinners he was dying to save, at the foot of the cross ridiculing him and telling him his life was a waste. Disregard it. God disregards a lot. God is perfect, but strangely ... not perfectionistic.

I had a revelation on our staff retreat. On our agenda ... again ... was "church bathrooms." Ugly, un-kept, abused clogged up on purpose bathrooms. On our agenda ... again. Oh if I had \$5 for every time we've talked about them! The only absolute cures seem to be: Close the church. Who wants that! Keep the bathrooms locked. Not humane. Have constant chaperones. So expensive we'd have to decrease or eliminate programs central to our mission. Or ... leave the facilities open, know there will be occasional abuses, deal the best we can ... and disregard the rest. We have to be careful not to get so co-opted by the gripes of a few well-intentioned neatniks we spend no time on important things. Sometimes ... with all respect... we have to disregard.

What might you be wise to disregard. Hurts from childhood, long over, already felt and learned from ... and now just hold on to as an excuse for not growing up and moving on. Small injustices done us. Chronic complaints from whiners. Obsession with details. Perfectionist or hyper-critical tendencies in ourselves. Sometimes I'm sure we are even supposed to disregard our own sins, as Jesus does, especially when they get in the way of experiencing God's grace and unconditional love.

How do you know when you're supposed to disregard, and when you're really called to regard and focus on and deal with? Only prayer, I guess, and being smart enough from time to time to ask yourself ... is this thing that's got me fussing and fuming really worth it.

Let's take a moment now and ask God whether there's some baloney thing like peer pressure, public opinion, fear, self-doubt, hurt, resentment --- that's taking too much time and energy, and we really need to disregard, to get on with the important thing of life: following Jesus, becoming holy, developing our capacity like Jesus to give life to others.