“Believe what you read, teach what you believe, and practice what you teach.” These words are part of the Ordination Rite that occurred last Saturday, when Bishop Coyne ordained 16 men of our Archdiocese to the Permanent Deaconate and two men as transitional Deacons. The Bishop speaks these words to the newly ordained as they kneel in front of him, and he presents the Book of Gospels to each of them. Four years ago I was in that same position at my ordination, but somehow, with everything else going on, those words were lost by me. Having the opportunity to be there last Saturday, and to re-live my own ordination, truly filled me with God’s grace and Spirit. It gave me a chance to look back at the promises and commitments that I made, to God, his Church and to all of you, by answering his call to the service of the Deaconate. I have been truly blessed and humbled by this call. As I was preparing this homily this week, these words kept coming back to me. Believe, teach and practice. For me personally, believing the Words of the Gospel of Jesus is easy. I put my faith and trust in the Word of God. Teaching what I believe is a little harder at times, but practicing what I teach, now that can be very difficult some times. After all, I am human also! We all make mistakes and make wrong or bad decisions, at times. We as humans, let pride and self-centeredness control us at times. We let our status in the material and economical world lead us astray of our true purpose in life. That is to love and serve God and all his creation. This is where the loving, healing, forgiving and compassionate God comes into my life, and all of our lives. Let us look at the two examples we just heard in the Gospel according to Mark.

First we hear of the synagogue official Jairus, whose daughter is near death, approaching Jesus, in a large crowd, falling to his knees and
pleading with Jesus to “come lay your hands on her that she may get well and live.” So Jesus, with a large crowd following heads to his house. But along the way, a woman who had been suffering for 12 years from hemorrhages, and had been treated by many doctors, spending all that she had and was still not cured, came up behind Jesus, “touched his cloak” and said, “If I but touch his clothes, I shall be cured.” She was immediately cured. Jesus, who felt the power drain out of him, stopped and asked “Who has touched my clothes?” The woman, who had been cured and realizing what had happened, heard this and approached Jesus, “in fear and trembling” fell down in front of Jesus and “told him the whole truth.” Jesus answering with compassion said to her, “Daughter, your faith has saved you. Go in peace and be cured of your affliction.” This woman, who at one time had to be a woman of means, as she had been treated by many doctors, and who because of her illness had become an outcast in society, was restored to a fullness of life, both socially and physically, by Jesus. Her deep faith in the healing power of Jesus was what healed her.

We now shift back to our first story. As Jesus sends the woman off, Jairus is told that his daughter has died and there was no longer a reason to “trouble the teacher.” When Jesus hears this he says to Jairus, “Do not be afraid, just have faith.” How many times in our own lives have we heard him say the same thing to us? When they arrive at the official’s house, to a lot of wailing and commotion Jesus tells the people that the “child is not dead but asleep”, and sends everyone out, except for Peter, James and John, and the girl’s parents. When they entered the room where the girl was, Jesus took her by the hand and said to her, “Talitha koum” which means, “Little girl, I say to you arise.” She immediately got up and walked around. The people with Jesus
“were utterly astounded” and Jesus told them to keep silent about what had happened and then in an act of human compassion tells them to feed the girl. Jesus not basking in his own glory for what had happened, was more concerned about the needs of the girl. This is a great lesson for all of us. It is not about us but it is all about the glory of God.

Both of these stories are about the healing power of God. It is about our faith and the faith that we need to show in God. We all in some way are in the need of God’s healing power. Both of the people that we heard about in the Gospel, the synagogue official and the suffering woman, fell to their knees in front of Jesus to ask for his help. I personally love the line in the Gospel when the woman that was healed “fell down before Jesus and told him the whole truth.” To me there are two clear messages in this reading and in these stories.

One, we can look at these from the context of our own lives. We all need some kind of healing for ourselves, families, friends and communities. It may be physical, mental or spiritual healing. We need to fall before the Lord and ask for his healing powers to fall upon us and those around us. God does heal and it is through the power of prayer, our prayer.

The second way to look at these stories is through the eyes of the Lord. We are all called to be followers of Christ. We are all called to love as Christ loved and to live with compassion and forgiveness. We are not called to judge those that are sick or may cause us an uneasy feeling, or may have hurt us in some way. It is not for us to judge whether someone’s condition is their own fault. Sometimes we only see the cause for the sickness and not the sick person. Do those that are sick
from their own sinfulness, lust or greed deserve any less care or love from us, than others? I think not! I know these people can be a pain to us but we need to remember that they are in pain and suffering also. We are called to care for all, no matter how hard that maybe for us. We are all called to forgive no matter what pain or suffering someone may have caused us. This is what being Christ like is about. This is what being a follower of Christ is about, putting others before ourselves! If we don’t do this, how can we really call ourselves followers of Christ?

Remember the words that I started with, “Believe what you read, teach what you believe, and practice what you teach.” With some slight modification these words can apply to all followers of Christ. Believe what you hear and read in the Gospel about the love of Christ for all, teach and spread this love to all, and live this love in all that we do for the greater glory of God.

One side comment before I close, if you really didn’t like my homily today you have a chance for revenge. On Tuesday night July 3rd, the Knights of Columbus are again hosting a night at the K of C hall to get together and watch the fireworks display. I think the night starts at 6:00PM with food, drinks and games for the kids. Also there will be a dunk tank there for an opportunity, for a small charge, to “Dunk the Deacon.” So here is your chance. Newly ordained Deacon Brad Anderson will also put his life on the line for your simple enjoyment.

May God bless each of you and your families and have a safe and blessed 4th of July holiday. Remember to keep our country and all our leaders in your prayers. May God always guide them to make just decisions for all.