The horrifying images of a twelve-story building collapsed like an accordion to the ground and the death of some of the occupants of that condominium frighten us.    Death is very much on the minds of the church in our Sunday readings starting with the Book of Wisdom and carrying over to the Gospel.

The few verses of chapters one and two from the Book of Wisdom we read today do not seem to do justice to the impact of these chapters.  I ask us to go home and open our Bibles and slowly read these two chapters.  We find an argument on behalf of the just man or woman, and there is a firm belief that God rewards the just and punishes the wicked.  The just ones live with the hidden counsels of the Lord to guide them, claims the writer of Wisdom, while the unjust, the wicked, are like ravenous animals who only know how to live for today and satisfy themselves.

According to Wisdom then God did not make death.  The Devil tempted human beings, Adam and Eve, and this led to human death.   God wills rather the immortality of justice.  And if justice is everlasting, so too will be those who practice it, says Wisdom.  On the other hand, the wicked embraced death insisting that both the body and the spirit come to an end.  All we have is here and now.  If this is true, then it makes sense according to the wicked to beset the just one who is obnoxious to us and to defeat the just who live above the rest of us.

Jesus appears as a living illustration of God’s justice.  He is filled with a hidden knowledge,  performs great deeds but becomes obnoxious to his critics.  Today’s miracles provided critics with ammunition.  Jesus performs two miracles.  One was quite shocking.  According to the justice of the day, Jesus should have been appalled at being made unclean by this woman.  “How dare she disturb my sanctity,” Jesus should have thought, “by transferring her impurity to me.”  I probably need to provide context.  This person was now impure ritually, religiously that is, because of her unstoppable flows of blood.  The source for this injunction is found in the Book of Leviticus 15:19-33.  A bleeding woman was considered impure and not permitted to touch others and make them impure also.

That Jesus seemed to ignore religious customs to assist the poor and needy must be granted.  We can defend Jesus on the ground that uppermost in his mind was teaching the value of faith.  Foremost in his mind was acknowledging the woman’s faith.  Of all people, she recognized him for who he was and became justified.  Jesus assured her faith had cured her illness forever

The case of the Synagogue official provides another opportunity to teach faith this time in the face of death.   Jesus is asking the synagogue official to believe that Jesus can justify this little girl, that is awaken her to life.  Jesus performs the miracle before his apostles to teach them, but he demands them to keep this knowledge to themselves.  Until Jesus himself died and rose, they would not fully understand this mystery. Together these miracles demand from us a response like that given by the woman.  The next time we need help, let us ask for a miracle or at the least ask God for justice. The hidden knowledge known to the just gives them hope of eternal life.  We can have that same hope too.