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Having Faith for Someone Else

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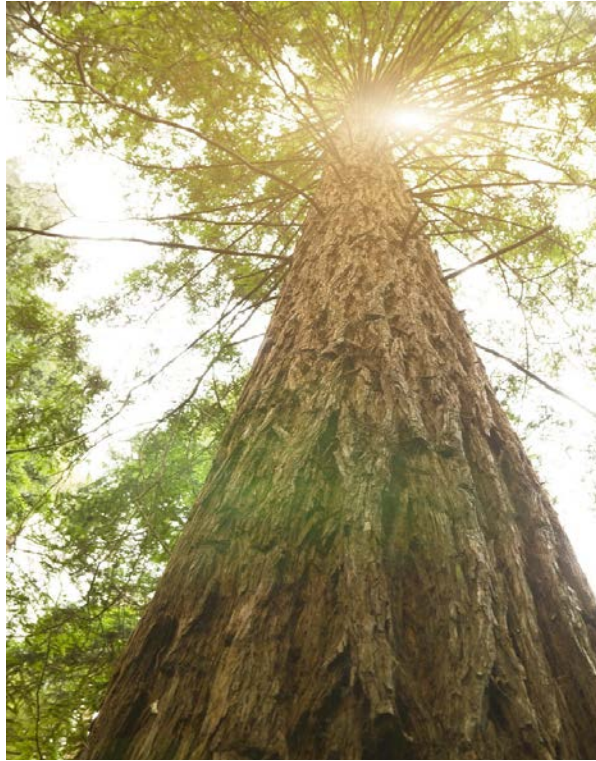
Having Faith for Someone Else

Abstract

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"Kahlil Gibran was an early 20th century poet, philosopher, and artist whose works still inspire many people. Kahlil Gibran once wrote: "You give but little when you give of you possessions. It is when you give of yourself that you truly give."

Inspirational Thoughts



Having Faith for someone else

By: Fr. Al Cylwicki

Kahlil Gibran was an early 20th century poet, philosopher, and artist whose works still inspire many people. Kahlil Gibran once wrote: “You give but little when you give of your possessions. It is when you give of yourself that you truly give.”

Today’s gospel story illustrates Gibran’s saying in a very strong way. Jesus heals a paralytic man in a most unusual way (not unusual in the sense that faith is at the center of the healing, but unusual because it is the faith of others that seems central to the man’s healing).

Most gospel miracle stories that mention faith note the faith of an individual asking for a healing or of an individual person who was healed. We recall how Jesus acknowledged the faith of the centurion, the faith of the woman who touched his cloak, the faith of the Canaanite woman who dared to approach him, the faith of the woman who washed and anointed his feet, and the faith of the blind man near Jericho.

However, in this single instance, today’s gospel highlights the faith of the four friends who bring the paralytic to Jesus rather than the faith of the paralytic, who may or may not have had the same faith. Even though these four friends encountered obstacles while trying to reach Jesus because of the crowd, they were undeterred and found a way to bring the paralytic through the roof of the home.

In his book *Invitation to Mark*, Rev. Paul Achtemeier observes: “Faith is ascribed to the four who brought the paralytic man... These four let nothing hinder them from bringing the paralytic to Jesus. That is what faith means in this story.”

There are two main points about faith in Achtemeier’s observation. One point is the faith of the four men whose friendship was instrumental in bringing about not only a healing for their paralytic companion, but also forgiveness of his sins.

Let’s go back to Gibran’s statement: “You give but little when you give of your possessions. It is when you give of yourself that you truly give.” Men of faith, the four friends gave of themselves (they gave their time and went through a lot of trouble just to bring the paralytic to Jesus. No material thing they could have given the cripple was worth more than that, and even if the cripple had not been healed, the gift of care and concern from his four friends would still have been priceless.

The second main point about faith in Achtemeier’s observation is its tenacity. Difficulties did not undermine the faith of the four friends; instead, their faith made them all the more determined. Possibilities of failure did not turn them away from their purpose; rather, they believed they would find some way to succeed.

Today we must examine our own faith and ask ourselves two questions. First, how can we be a faithful friend to others (faithful in the sense of giving of ourselves to them)? How can we bring blessings into the lives of others through our faith in the presence and power of Jesus?

Second, how can we strengthen our own faith to overcome obstacles we confront (whether in issues of health, finances, or relationships)? How can we believe more firmly that the Lord is always with us, and not allow anything to hinder us from serving him and our neighbor even to the point of heroism?