

GATHERED INSPIRED SENT



CALLED TO SERVE

ORDER OF FRIAR SERVANTS OF MARY
Vocation Newsletter



Christ Healing the Blind Man, by Andrey Mironov - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=30520270>

Do you want to be healed? When Jesus asks persons in the gospel this question, the response of any sick or hurting person seems obvious, “Yes, of course, I want to be healed!” That’s certainly what I said when I was treated

for cancer two years ago. Wouldn’t you also answer in the affirmative? However, Jesus asks another question, “Do you believe that I can heal you?” This question takes the focus off our hurts and desires, and invites us to ponder our faith and trust in God. Jesus did not heal people as an end in itself, but as a sign of powerful divine love, to reconcile all persons and creatures into wholeness and unity, and to lead the healed person into deeper faith and compassion. He tells paralyzed and blind persons, “I will not only heal your body, but will also forgive your sins and return you to the family and community from which you’ve been separated!”

Jesus could be called, in today’s terms, an holistic healer, who not only touched and healed bodies, but also awakened hearts, gave people back a sense of purpose, freed them from fear, discouragement or hopelessness, and brought isolated, marginalized, forgotten, or shamed persons back into the community. Every sign of healing by Jesus offered a more joyful, full and secure life to people whose lives were in some way constricted, saddened or threatened. The need for

healing, then, becomes the context for a deeper encounter with life, with love, with God, and encourages growth in our compassion for others who suffer. Of ten healed lepers, only one really “got it,” and came back to thank and to follow Jesus, rather than simply return to previous “normal life.” It can be a big step forward in our faith when we come to realize that, even if our bodies are not ‘cured’ in the way we desire, we may experience other forms of healing which we may not have given much thought to, until we, or someone we love, becomes seriously ill.

For example, a friend of mine with advanced metastatic cancer found incredible healing in his being reconciled with estranged friends shortly before he died. A woman who had struggled with self-acceptance, and had spent so much of her life comparing herself to others, when faced with diminishment of her human capabilities, finally accepted the truth that she was good, good enough, and loved, just as God created her. Whether in hospitals, care facilities or at home, persons sometimes experience some healing in the form of a simple quiet



presence, a loving touch, and spoken words which affirm, comfort and express love. The very acceptance of one's illness can be healing, when a person gradually lets go of understandable anger, sadness, and even doubt about God's presence, and surrenders into a gentle dependence on God's compassion, shown in ways they may have previously missed, because they were hoping for something else. I once prayed for a dear friend's healing, knowing, deep down, that she would experience ultimate healing only by passing into God's eternity.

known for a ministry of compassion to those whose crosses of suffering take so many forms.

In the spirit of St Peregrine, then, we are all invited to reflect on both of Jesus' questions to us, "Do you want to be healed?" and also, "Do you believe I can heal you?" In some gospel stories, Jesus explicitly states that the person's faith made the healing possible. While healing does not overly depend on us, nor our degree of faith, we do seem to have a choice to make, and that is to trust and to allow God to heal

Reflection Questions:

1. What do I need Jesus to heal in my life? How can I help the healing process?
2. What are the ways that I can bring Jesus' healing presence to the world?

So when Jesus asks, "Do you believe I can heal you?" his question can include physical, mental, emotional and spiritual aspects of our lives, including inner and inter-personal struggles, like painful childhood memories, a struggling marriage, the absence of joy, the giving or receiving of forgiveness, recovery from abuse and violence, and more. We may also realize that healing is usually a process, which requires time, patience and perseverance. And sometimes the healing process itself can hurt, whether physically, like a bone that needs to be re-broken in order to heal properly, or emotionally, like 'scar tissue' that forms to protect a wound, but which can also make deeper healing more challenging. Some people refuse chemotherapy because the price for healing is too high. Jesus' question, then, may imply, "Will you give me access to your wounded places, and trust me to touch them with healing love?" While we wait for the healing we desire, God may be waiting for our permission to heal us more deeply, or in different ways, or to notice how healing is already slowly happening in places we had not noticed. While we who are reading this article may first have been attracted by St Peregrine's miraculous cure, his 'healing' had actually begun years earlier when he experienced the understanding and forgiveness of Father Philip Benizi, OSM, a man of peace. That encounter led him into a community

us as God wishes. Whether healed as we would like or not, we may experience a moment of self-discovery about our true relationship with our Creator, and what we really believe. Our prayer may sometimes be a simple attention to our lives, and awareness of the healing presence of God in them, in ways we might not have thought about or even imagined. And when we are ready and willing to respond, with some degree of authentic conviction and wholeheartedness, "Yes, I believe and trust that you can heal me," then we may also hear something similar to what the people in the Scripture stories heard: Your eyes are now opened to see what you've been missing; your ears hear the Word spoken in your heart and in nature and through others; you have been made clean in order to begin again; so get up and walk...especially toward others who might experience some healing through your compassion for them, as one who believes, trusts, and continues to be healed.

- Fr. John Fontana, OSM

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