

This guy's walking down a street when he falls in a hole. The walls are so steep that he can't get out. A doctor passes by, and the guy shouts up, "Hey you, can you help me out?" The doctor writes a prescription, throws it down the hole and moves on. Then a priest comes along, and the guy shouts up "Father, I'm down in this hole, can you help me out?" The priest writes out a prayer, throws it down the hole along with a Bible and moves on. Then a friend walks by. "Hey Joe, it's me, can you help me out?" And the friend jumps in the hole. Our guy says, "Are you crazy? Now we're both down here." The friend says, "Yeah, but I've been down here before, and I know the way out."

Life has its share of pitfalls and holes that we, from time to time find ourselves in. Sometimes we see the hole, but many times we don't realize that we've fallen into one until we find ourselves at the bottom looking up and have no idea how we got there or how to get out. This is daily life for people living on the margins and peripheries of society. They are shunned and kept at arm's length. Society has turned its back on them, much like the woman in our Gospel reading today who has been suffering with a hemorrhage for 12 years. She has spent all her money on doctors who couldn't help her and has been ostracized by her own people because she is ritually unclean according to Jewish law. She has no resources left, nowhere to go, and no one to turn to.

It's a common story in the Gospels: a person on the peripheries of society, struggling to survive. There's the story of Jesus' encounter with the woman at the well. She's found herself rejected by her people because of her lifestyle, being forced to draw water during the hottest part of the day when no one else is around. The Syrophenician woman, begging for her child to be healed, tells Jesus that even the dogs eat the scraps left under the table. The Centurion who seeks healing for his servant. No law-abiding Jew would be speaking to a Roman soldier, let alone enter into his house. Two common threads in these stories are: healing and faith. All of these people are searching for healing either for themselves or for

others and they all come to have faith in Jesus at various points in their encounters with him, hoping that he will provide the healing they desperately seek. Even Jairus, who's at the center of Jewish society seeks healing and places his faith in Jesus. While they all have faith in Jesus, their faith varies. One needs to actually see Jesus come to his house and heal his daughter. Another believes that by simply touching Jesus' clothing, she will be healed. The strength of the Centurion's faith is demonstrated in his conviction that a simple word, uttered by Jesus, will heal his servant.

There is another common thread in these stories: Jesus is the **source** of life and healing. As the First Reading says today, "God does not rejoice in the destruction of the living." God made us in the image of His own nature and we learn in the first letter of John that God is love. Jesus loves us so much that he was willing to become one of us, to be naked and destitute on a cross, to die for us, pouring out his love and healing upon us. St. Paul gives the Corinthians this model of Christ, pouring his love out upon them as a model on how they should treat one another. Just as Christ poured out his love, mercy, and entire self for us, we in turn are called to pour out our love to others.

And so, we return to our guy who has fallen in the hole. Just who is this friend that jumps down into the hole with him? That friend is you and me. Jesus is our model of love to others, pouring out the love within us to those who are on the margins and the peripheries of society. We need to be that friend who pours out our love and jumps into that hole. Jesus jumped into the hole with us, pouring out everything he had to become human and die for us. Jesus calls each one of us to jump in the hole and help those whom society has cast aside. As he told us in today's Gospel: Do not be afraid; just have faith!

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