

"The tertiaries, therefore, though they possess property and earn money to support themselves and their families and dependents, must yet by their readiness to live simply and to share with others, show themselves true followers of the Christ of Bethlehem and of their patron saint." ("The Principles")

How can I be a follower of Francis? If he were to come to our town today, would I be in the crowd close to him; or would I hang back on the edges - listening, wondering, desiring - yet..yet.. Yet, what? Not daring?

The Society of St. Francis is founded on poverty. But I'm not poor. I have a home, clothes, ample food. I have access to doctors, dentists, schools. I have friends I can depend on. I have a car. In our home are various appliances. Poor? Far from it. How then can I call myself a follower of St. Francis? What is the validity of my claim? Why is there the gap between the desire and the reality?

I return to our Lord's commandment, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell what thou hast and give it to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come, follow me." I compare my response to this commandment with the action that Francis took. He gave up everything, literally. But I know that I am not going to give up everything. I can't. What would happen to my family? Who would take care of them? It certainly would not be an act of love on my part, for my spouse and children were given to me by God and I am to care for them to the best of my ability.

How then can I resolve this dilemma? First of all, perhaps it would help to clarify my attitude more, if I could answer the following questions:

What if there were no one dependent on me?

Would I then be willing to follow the example of Francis?

If I understand fully what that question demands of me, then I will be able to answer whether or not I consider myself a Franciscan. Franciscan! Better yet, my answer will give me a clue as to whether or not I can call myself a Christian. Christ spoke to all men. St. Francis was not being a Franciscan in his response to our Lord's call. He was being a Christian who took Christ's words at face value, just as did another contemporary martyr, Dietrich Bonhoeffer. In his book, "The Cost of Discipleship", Bonhoeffer explores what it means to take the gospel literally.

Christ gave the command. Saint Francis is an example of the near-perfect follower. If then I can answer that question posed above, I will have a clue as to my attitude.

Assuming, hopefully, that my answer is more in the affirmative, still I will not be satisfied entirely. There will be that sense of incompleteness, that feeling that the circle is not fully completed. But I must realize that this is part of the Christian tension. It is the result of being in the world but not captured by it. I know that the tension will be with me all my life, and I thank God for it, since I will not be as apt to fall into a state of self-satisfied complacency. As one grows spiritually, he continues to see where he

falls short, and this is part of the pain and of the thrilling experience of our journey. It was so with St. Francis.

Suppose I were a friar, achieving simplicity should be no problem. Yet, here is what Br. Paul, SSF, had to say about this: "Religious cannot ever know poverty as the poor know it. We have our security in God, and in the loving unity of our community . . . Nor can we know the physical needs of the poor. We each have a private room - and some even have a private bath! We live in spacious buildings with separate rooms for eating, for worship, for library. To forego the exercise of dominion is a poor excuse for poverty. If Religious are to be a sign of God's love for the world, they must be a witness of His love for the poor, and not just as individuals; the community itself must find ways of identifying with the poor."

How then are we to understand the vow of poverty? Some have even suggested that the vow of poverty be changed to a vow of simplicity, as more in keeping with the facts of life. But the vow of poverty can be understood in this sense::

(1) As ridding ourselves of impedimenta. If we are to identify with the poor of this world - poor in material things, poor in faith, poor in self-esteem, poor in spirit; then we must first clear the decks of everything we do not actually need in order to serve God. It is not a question of how much we can keep and still serve God, but of what is essential if we are to serve God.

(2) As attachment to God alone. Nothing else really matters. It is longing to be free of all things, so we may be completely dependent on God. Happy are those who know how poor they are, that God may be all in all. As poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

(3) As a generous sharing of what we do have to give. St. Francis is quoted as having said, 'I should expect to be looked upon as a thief by the Supreme Almsgiver if I did not bestow what I have on those whose need is greater than my own.'

(4) As an emptiness to be filled. I long to be filled with the fullness of God. I am nothing, I have nothing, I desire nothing save God alone. Empty-handed I stand before the throne of His grace, confidently, joyously, begging His love."

As tertiaries, we can apply these words to our own lives, to whatever position or station in life God has called us.

"They will seek after a continually deepening fellowship with God in personal devotion, and will desire constantly to life up before him .. the needs of His Body and of the whole world" ("The Principles")

St. Teresa of Avila said that "the whole aim of those who undertake prayer must be to labor and resolve and dispose themselves, with all the diligence they can, to make their will conform with the will of God." In that short definition of prayer lies its glory and its difficulty.

The sine qua non of creative prayer are four words that are so familiar to us that we almost overlook them. Yet, they are indeed four pillars of prayer. If any one of them is lacking, our prayers will be wobbly. They are: love of God, simplicity of living, humility, and, trust in God.

1. Saint Francis, of course, exemplified the person who loved God. There are people who are puzzled by Francis' activities. Why would anyone want to live in such extreme poverty, or to suffer such extensive hardships, doing such extraordinary work? What is overlooked is that Francis was a man truly in love. He loved God with all his mind, heart, soul, and body. When you and I love someone deeply and completely, what may seem to be a sacrifice to someone else is perfectly natural to us. Husbands and wives sacrifice for one another. Parents do all kinds of things for their children without thinking that they are heroes. And so it is with someone who loves God.

"But how do you love God?" someone asked the priest in Kazantzakis' novel, "The Greek Passion." "By loving people," came the answer. But this is only part of the real answer, for we are also meant to love God directly. "But how can you love an abstraction?" the youngster asked. "Do you try to get yourself psyched up the way we do before we play a game?" What this youngster does not know yet is that God is not an abstraction. God is. But most of us have a similar problem and we feel guilty for not having the kind of love for God that we feel for a spouse or a child or a friend. Yet if we persist, this love does grow in us and it is a real love and it fills the heart with an unspeakable joy.

"My heart hath talked of thee. Seek ye my face; Thy face, Lord, will I seek." One of the most important daily prayers is that we should ask to be taught to love - that we be taught to love not only people, but God himself.

2. When it comes to simplicity of living, we so often think only in terms of physical things. Quite often someone will write on a monthly report that because of his low salary, he is forced to live simply. Much more is meant by this word, simplicity, than material things.

It is a whole approach to life. We can clutter our lives up with activities, as well as things. Occasionally a novice has written that he is so busy that he really does not have enough time to say his Office or meditate. Admittedly, there are days when activities overwhelm us. This is part of being fully immersed in life. But when this develops into a consistent pattern, an

appraisal of our time must be taken so that unessential activities may be stripped away. We are custodians of our time, just as much as we are custodians of our possessions. Poor use of time is detrimental to the growth of the inner spirit.

3. St. Ignatius wrote that "each person must realize that he will make progress in all spiritual matters in proportion to his flight from self-love, self-will and self-interest". All are directly related to the problems of humility.

4. I am astounded at how often the word; "trust", or the subject, is referred to in the Psalter. In struggling with the problem of doing God's will, trusting in him is a prerequisite. It is so easy to say - thy will be done. The words trip off our tongue, and we understand the intent but we mean it a lot less than more.

Once someone was very ill. He had had an operation for an advanced malignancy. He prayed for recovery, but there were periods when this possibility was in doubt. He was deeply distressed, for he had much to live for and he loved all of life. He wrestled daily with God. But it was only when he fully surrendered, when he finally realized that he must trust in God's wisdom and mercy as to his fate that almost in anger he said, "If in dying I am doing your will, I now fully accept this." And he meant every word of it. This was a turning point in his spiritual life.

We pray, and we know what we want. But too often we do not trust in God, and our prayers are shadowed with doubt.

"There came up a heavy displeasure against Israel because they believed not in God, and put not their trust in his help." "Commit thy way unto the Lord, and put thy trust in Him, and He shall bring it to pass." "For in thee, O Lord, have I put my trust." Faith and hope are bound up in the one word: trust, and it is a vital attitude in helping one towards doing God's will more perfectly.

Love, simplicity, humility, trust -- four wings of prayer. To recall them more easily, you might think of the phrase, "Lucky Strike Has Tobacco". Certainly the phrase is unrelated to prayer, but the words are easy to remember.

To test your progress in prayer or in spiritual growth (they are one and the same), test yourself against these four areas. As your capacity to love, to live simply, to curb self-interest, or to trust in God grows, so your capacity to pray will grow also.

These are desperate times, and we must meet secular strength with spiritual fortitude. The stronger we are in God's spirit, the more we will be able to do for him. In this way we are not only renewed within ourselves, but by following in the footsteps of Saint Francis we will help to renew the Church.

"Again and again were the words of the Psalmist on his lips, the words which are the foundation of all true worship of God: Show, O Lord, your ways to me, and teach me your paths. (Ps. 24:4)...Thus Francis became a man of prayer. He had begun to taste the sweetness of prayer, and prayed continually." (Jorgensen, Johannes; "St. Francis of Assisi"; Image Books)

Prayer is one of our closest, personal contacts with God. It brings us consciously into his presence. Yet even among Christians, personal prayer is something of a rarity. "Unless we are very careful, man will atrophy by being cut off from his source. And this spiritual underdevelopment will not be the least of the collective sins of mankind at a time when man's growing awareness and his control over the world requires rather a vastly increased spiritual development. Unless we pray, and unless we pray more than did the men who preceded us, then we shall destroy ourselves." (Quoist, Michael; "Christ is Alive"; Image Books)

Part of the problem is not being aware of the reality of Christ - that Christ is alive and in the midst of us today. People do not fully comprehend that the Gospel promised God would send us the Holy Spirit, the Christ spirit, to be among us as a reality. We are also given the promise that this Holy Spirit can be in us and we in the Holy Spirit. This is accomplished by believing in Jesus and accepting him as our Lord. We continue this relationship through our prayers, increasing our knowledge of Jesus through the New Testament, and trying to practice the love of God as we go about our daily lives. We must always remind ourselves that Christ cannot receive our life unless we offer it to him.

What is sad is that people overlook the beautiful simplicity of prayer. To pray is simple. It is as simple as speaking, it is as simple as holding on to a thought, as simple as being quietly content.

What has happened is that too many people have thought it depended on technique, that one had to be proficient in some kind of method. How wrong they are. Prayer is not a matter of technique. There is no formula or rigid set of exercises by which prayer can be learned. Yes, it is true that certain attitudes we bring to prayer will help us draw closer to God, to be more consciously in his presence. For example, St. Teresa of Avila tells us that "it isn't a matter of thinking a great deal, but of loving a great deal". Prayer is an exchange of love.

Prayer is meant to change us, not God.

Jesus didn't say anything about the difficulties of prayer. When his disciples asked him about praying, he didn't launch into a long discourse on its intricacies. What he did say was this, "In your prayers do not use a lot of words as the pagans do who think God will hear them because of their long prayer. Don't be like them. God is your Father, and he already knows what you need before you ask him. This is the way you should pray." (Good News for Modern Man, Mt. 6:7-8) Then he gave them what we know as the Lord's Prayer, the model of all prayers. It is simple, direct and short.

When we speak of the difficulties of prayer, we find the problem lies within us, not with prayer. It is nothing like learning to speak Chinese, or

taking a course in Calculus. Nor is it esoteric, an art for only a select few. Prayer is for all people, everywhere, at all times. It can be a cry of anguish or a simple thanks. It can be a desperate request, or a careful searching for understanding. It can be remaining quietly in his presence warmed by his love, or an exuberant shout of joy.

Mental prayer is a loving relationship, a frequent conversation with the one who loves us best.

Excitement was so evident in one woman's demeanor. Reading St. John, thinking about what Jesus was saying to her, praying, she received insights that were enlightening and extremely important to her. At the same time she was able to pour out her gratitude to God for answering prayers concerning a close friend in very unhappy circumstances.

What we are concerned about, really, is with a whole quality of life. We know that in our spiritual quest our ultimate desire is to be able to do God's will as well as we can. Prayer is a way of helping to accomplish this. It is a means of sensitizing ourselves so that we can be aware of his will, to be better able to discern it. Prayer is that time when we consciously hold ourselves in his presence.

Our entire life must be directed toward the one aim of conforming our life pattern to God's will. This is why prayer is so essential. Prayer is not so much a channel as it is an entire environment that exposes us to God. And it is this exposure to God's loving light and warmth that changes us, that helps us flower into new attitudes. You do change as a Christian, your attitudes change. And the change is to manifest the fruits of the spirit (Galatians 5:22). You lose your fears and anxieties (Philippians 4:5-7). "I will go forth in the strength of the Lord God." (Psalm 71:15)

Jesus was most explicit when he talked about the blind being able to see. Problems are not necessarily removed from you, but because your whole life has become a unity, you see all things in a new perspective and concomitantly with new solutions.

As one grows in the habit of prayer, his prayer becomes simpler. There is a tendency to present one's concerns to God, and to leave them more surely in his hands, knowing he will take care of them. Your deepest desire is to do God's will. At the same time, one slips more frequently into contemplation - the prayer of quiet - when we are simply aware of being in his presence without words, without requests, without real thought.

"In this wordless prayer (contemplation), the praying soul learns to be content, to leave the initiative to God, and through this prayer by imperceptible degrees, the human will is brought over, more and more, into accord with the divine will."

(Mary Johnson, "Contemplative Prayer", Third Order Chronicle, 1972)

COMMUNITY

The first and ultimate community is God, the Holy Trinity, one God in Three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The persons of the Holy Trinity have one mind; there is no division in the unity of God, though there is a diversity of function.

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us in community. When the Second Person of the blessed Trinity, the Son of God, assumed our flesh, our humanity, in order to reconcile us to our Father in Heaven, He was born into a human family, a community made ready for Him. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph formed not only a family but also a community.

When Jesus began His public ministry, He selected a community, brothers who were to form the nucleus of His Church, His continuing life among us. These men lived closely with Jesus and with each other, sharing their love and their concerns with each other and with their Master.

St. Francis attracted men to himself as soon as he began to live a life of total dedication to the love of Jesus. Like Jesus, he found brothers and sisters who wanted to walk with him in the Gospel way. Longing often for a life of solitude devoted entirely to prayer, Francis found community a mixed blessing. His brothers and sisters often disappointed him; they brought him both joy and grief.

Such has always been the way of community. In our human families we struggle to find our own identity lest we be crushed by the common mind. When we choose to become part of the Franciscan community, we struggle to find a common mind with brothers and sisters whose identities vary greatly from our own. We find brothers and sisters who are so close to us in the heart of our Lord Jesus that we want to cry for joy. We also find brothers and sisters who are deep mysteries, in whom we must struggle to reach the Christ who is our bond, our head, our Savior, and our salvation.

Finding the Christ in our brothers and sisters is part of our Franciscan journey. As Jesus walked in a community of men who tore His Sacred Heart by betraying Him, denying Him, and misunderstanding Him, so we too walk in a community of love with those who will disappoint us often, rescue us often, puzzle us often, and love us more than we deserve. Jesus defined the relationship that we ought to have with our community: we are to be a servant to all.

Community is a risk. All human creatures have a community of some sort, because we were born in and for community. We cannot escape community. We can, however, go through life slithering and sliding in and out of different communities, avoiding responsibility and avoiding the commitment of total dedication.

We who have chosen the Third Order of St. Francis have made a commitment not only to a rule and way of life but also to a family. We have chosen to be part of a family that has a common way of life but whose members may or may not appeal to us. That's the risk.

It is easy to be deceived about families. We meet a few Franciscans whom we think are soul-mates, and we assume all members of this community will be equally appealing. It will not be so. Community is always work.

Look at Jesus' community of followers. How many of them would you have enjoyed spending an afternoon with? The meticulous Judas Iscariot, concerned with his own expectations and whether Jesus measured up to them? The perennially doubting and

truculent Thomas, who was prepared to walk with Jesus to death itself but not without many questions first? The headstrong Peter, whose performance was not always up to his bravado? James and John, who were determined to be guaranteed first place?

Such men were chosen by Jesus to be the foundation of His Church, the Ark of Salvation. They were no easier to understand or to tolerate than were Francis (the impractical troubadour), Juniper (the foolish), Leo (the devoted), or Elias (the betrayer). They were no better company for an afternoon than are the brothers and sisters in our local fellowships, whose peculiarities and foibles we see so clearly.

Our life in community means a responsible commitment to love and serve all our brothers and sisters in order that we may all be better able to fulfill God's purposes in the world. If we meet as regularly as possible with our brothers and sisters in order to sustain, support, and serve them, we may find that we too are being sustained, supported, and served.

A few tertiaries may be called to the life of solitude and prayer, the eremitical or semi-eremitical life. Those so chosen will serve community by steadfast praise and intercession.

There may be times for all of us when regular meetings with our brothers and sisters prove to be impossible for practical, physical, emotional, or spiritual reasons. At those times we should be most careful to pray with diligence for our community and to keep the Chaplain informed of our circumstances.

Community is our obligation as tertiaries, and community is work. The reports we make as novices and as professed are an aspect of community. They serve to make us obedient one to another and to form in each of us the mind of our Lord Jesus. For isolated tertiaries, reporting and prayer may be the only vital links to community. Most of us, however, will attend fellowship meetings, whether we enjoy them or not, in order to unite our efforts with those of our brothers and sisters to build the Body of Christ and to make our love for one another a witness to the Light and Love of Jesus our Lord. Community will often be a joy, but often it will not be easy. It was not easy for Jesus. It was not easy for Francis. We who try to follow our Lord Jesus in the way of St. Francis have not chosen an easy way. We have chosen the only way compatible with our God-given vocation.

"Prayer was something he took seriously. Christians are often profuse in promises to pray for each other - promises which are seldom kept. Francis was not like this. The Abbot of the Convent of St. Justin of Perugia had once recommended himself to Francis to be remembered in his prayers when taking leave of him. Francis regarded this as more than a phrase; he had gone only a few steps when he said to his companion, 'Let us pray for the Abbot as we promised him.'" (St. Francis of Assisi, Johannes Jorgensen, Image Books)

Intercessory prayer is that prayer when we ask God's help, when we ask him to intercede in the affairs of the world, for the distress of others, in taking action in someone else's life. The word comes from the Latin inter, "between", and cedere, "to go". It signifies, literally, going between. We are asking God to go between a situation and the condition or individual for whom we pray. Because intercession asks nothing for ourself it is a most loving prayer, perhaps the most loving of all. It follows Jesus' instructions: "This is my commandment: love one another, just as I love you. The greatest love a man can have for his friends is to give his life for them." (Jn. 15:12 and 13) We are not offering our life. But in offering our prayers for someone or something other than for ourself, in this sense, then, we also offer a part of ourselves.

To pray in this way means that we are praying for "all sorts and conditions of men". It is to pray for individuals; it is to pray for the world. We pray for God's holy Catholic Church and for particular churches and dioceses throughout the world. We pray for members of our parish, for the Presiding Bishop, our Bishops, our Priest and Deacon. We pray for peace in the world and for those who are responsible for bringing it about. Praying for peace suggests we should keep up with the news, to know who to pray for specifically. We pray for all who suffer, and at times for the departed. We pray for certain individuals to be converted to Christ. And during the day in our work there are always a myriad of people and situations to pray about. One woman I know has a quick prayer for emergencies when there's not time for reflection: "Lord undertake!"

Many of our prayers are concerned with the healing of people, who may or may not have an understanding of prayer. Since the problems of intercession come more sharply into focus in healing, this chapter will concentrate in that area.

You ask and receive not, because you ask amiss. (Jas. 4:3)

From a letter, "The doctor found a very large mass in my abdomen, and I am to have an operation as soon as the tests are completed. I am so scared I shake all over. Please pray for me. It is hard at the moment to do anything but be scared. I have not put God aside but I am just mentally curled into a ball yelling, 'Oh God, help!' She longs for a healing miracle. Through the loving intercession of others she finds that, though what she is asking for is right, she has put her request to God in the wrong order. What she will want to do first is to ask Christ to be in her life so that she will be made whole in him, and then to open herself to his love. She must become a Christian in fact rather than in name. "Seek his kingdom, and these things shall be yours as well." (Lk. 12:33) That is God's promise. God is to be the absolute center of our life, all else flows from that. St. Francis and St. Clare lived only for God. Because God and love are synonymous, our lives then will be lived in loving relationships. The most important fact of any healing is that we become whole in Christ. Physical healing is important and we pray that this will take place, but it is secondary.

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We ask wrongly in another sense. We tend to specify just how God will accomplish the healing we are asking for. In this we are guilty of the sin of presumption, the opposite of humility.

None of us can read the mind of God. We cannot predict that he will heal in one way or another. We cannot tell the time or means. We cannot say that he or she apparently was not healed, through lack of real faith. All we know is that God will heal - how and when and where he deems best - and that includes even death, for in death we are perfectly healed for we are with God.

"For what is life? To me, it is Christ. Death then will be gain. But if by living on I can do more worthwhile work, then I am not sure which I should choose. I am caught from both sides. I want very much to leave this life and be with Christ, which is a far better thing. But it is more important for your sake that I remain alive." (Philippians 1:21-24)

"We pray for healing not because we fear death but in obedience to our Lord's command to heal the sick; and with the realization that the life we pray for, whether ours or someone else's, may be more needful here on earth." (The Healing Power of Christ, Emily Gardiner Neal, Hawthorne, 1972)

We must remain patient that the answer will come. And for most of us, patience is a Christian virtue hard to come by. We forget that even the simplest request we make entails many other related changes. As human beings we are all interrelated and a change in one situation alters another, and so on infinitum. Furthermore, when we pray for someone's situation there are many factors which will be involved: rooted patterns of personal behavior, health, "the reorganization of emotional patterns, the conquest of moral temptations - we are up against deeply entrenched forces, persistent elements in nature and in human nature, which do not give way at the first impulsive wish, however sincere our prayer is meant to be." (Rediscovering Prayer, John L. Casteel, Association Press 1955)

OTHER CONDITIONS AFFECTING HEALING

Faith We know that someone must have faith in a healing by divine intervention - either the one who is healed or the one performing the mission. This faith is rooted in a love for God, in acknowledging that God is my all. He is the source of your real joy, your love, your being. It is that faith that says with St. Paul, "We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him." (Rom. 8:28) One of the advantages of healing services is that we can "borrow" the faith of others when our own resources are low. For healing to take place it is not necessary, of course, to attend a healing service. For our Lord gave us the promise that whatever we ask in his name will be done for us. Asking in his name, however, presupposes that we have left ourselves open to God's will. This is what Jesus did. It's no easy task.

Forgive "If you do not forgive others, then your Father in Heaven will not forgive the wrong you have done." (Mt. 6:15) This injunction is as binding on the intercessor as it is on the one we are asking God to heal. "The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effect." (Jas. 5:16) We are offering ourselves in prayer to be used as a channel, and it is important that the channel be pure and free from impediments.

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Praise and Thanksgiving "Praise the Lord, praise the Lord my soul. As long as I live, I will praise the Lord." (Ps. 146:1,2) It is being awestruck, in being overwhelmed by just the sheer thought of God, by bursting out in joyous song acknowledging his splendor in infinite ways we praise him, not that he needs our praise. Rather, it is our need to be aware of his majesty, of our dependence on him in all things.

And we thank God. We thank him "always and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, in God the Father." (Eph. 5:20)

When we are suffering normally it is difficult to thank God for the injury. St. Paul says we should, and as we grow spiritually perhaps we will. What we can do now is to thank him in the suffering. He will come to us and see us through, with his strength and love which he passes on to us. It seems to be a paradox, but those Christians who suffer much seem to radiate God's love the most. Emily Gardiner Neal, a Tertiary, reports that whenever St. Francis de Sales was in dire need of prayer, invariably he called on someone who was in pain. If we allow him to, God uses our suffering to benefit others.

Persistence Persistence and patience have much in common. Jesus told us that we should always pray and never become discouraged. (Lk. 18:1) He does this, it seems, for two reasons - first, because of our interrelatedness to one another and all the following complexities. Second, because our Lord wants us to be the best of ourselves, not to settle for anything less, that is, not to settle for a lesser faith, a lesser grace. He wants us to realize the magnanimity, the exhilarating, unforgettably joyous experience of stepping into the aura of God's full grace.

Louis Evely writes, "In reading the Gospels have you ever noticed that the Lord inevitably starts by vetoing the miracles asked of him? This confirms the impression we have that our own prayers remain fruitless. But have you noticed also that in the end, he always rewards those who persevere unshaken?" (Teach us to pray, Louis Evely, Newman Press 1971)

For example, there is the miracle of the wine at the wedding, where Mary did not become disheartened when her son first refused her request (Jn. 2:18) The illness and death of Lazarus ultimately caused Martha in her anguish to acknowledge him as the Messiah, the Son of God. The miracle was for the benefit of Jesus' followers as well. (Jn. 11:1-44) And then, the Canaanite woman seeking the cure of her daughter was pressed by Jesus. Each refusal intensified her request and her faith. He challenged her to seek the highest, and he wrung it out of her to the point that almost in amazement he said to her, "You are a woman of great faith." (Mt. 15:21-28) Search the Gospels for other illustrations.

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