

July Word of Life

'Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well.' (Mt. 9:22)

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Jesus is walking onwards and is surrounded by the crowds: a desperate father has begged him to come to the aid of his daughter who is dying. While he is on his way, another encounter takes place: a woman who has been suffering from a haemorrhage for many years makes her way through the people; her physical condition is serious and, in addition, it forces her to limit her family and social interactions. The woman does not call out to Jesus, she does not speak, but she comes up behind him and dares to touch the fringe of his garment. She has a very clear idea, 'If all I do is touch his cloak, I will be healed of this suffering that torments me.'

And lo and behold, Jesus turns, looks at her and reassures her: her faith has obtained salvation. Not only physical health: Jesus' gaze brings about an encounter with God's love

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This episode from Matthew's Gospel opens up an unexpected perspective for us too: God is always on his way towards us, but he also awaits our initiative so that we do not miss our appointment with him. Our journey of faith is of great value, even if it is bumpy and marked by mistakes, fragility and disappointments. He is the Lord of true Life and he wants to share this life with all of us, his sons and daughters, who, in his eyes, are rich with a dignity that no circumstances can suppress. For this reason, today too Jesus says to us:

Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well.

We can be helped to live this Word by what Focolare founder, Chiara Lubich, wrote when meditating on this very Gospel passage: *'Through their faith, men and women clearly demonstrate that they do not rely on themselves but trust in the One who is stronger than them. Jesus calls the woman he has healed 'daughter' to show that he really wants to give her not only the gift of physical healing but also the gift of divine life that can renew her entirely. In fact, Jesus works miracles so that we can accept the salvation that he brings. He embodies the Father's gift of forgiveness and when this is communicated to people, it transforms them. How can we live this Word? By showing God our trust in him when we face serious challenges. Such an attitude certainly does not relieve us of our responsibilities, nor does it dispense us from doing all we can. But our faith can be put to the test. We see it clearly in this suffering woman who is able to overcome the obstacle of the crowd that stands between her and the Master. We must have faith, then, but faith that does not doubt in the face of difficulties. And, again, we must show Jesus that we have understood the immense gift that he has brought us, the gift of divine life, and be grateful to him and correspond to it.'*

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This faith certainty allows us to collaborate in bringing salvation too, by tenderly 'touching' those who are suffering, those in need, in darkness or feeling lost.

This is what happened to a mother from Venezuela who found the courage to forgive: 'I was feeling desperate for help when I attended a meeting on the Gospel where I heard Jesus' words: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God", and "Love your enemies." Love your enemies. How could I forgive those who had killed my son? But in the meantime, a seed had entered into me and the decision to forgive finally prevailed. Now I can truly call myself a "child of God". Recently I was called to a meeting with my son's killer who had been caught. It was hard but grace intervened. There was no hatred or rancour in my heart, only great pity and the intention to entrust him to God's mercy.'

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