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Healing at St. Christopher's Inn – A Daily Miracle

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Today, we sometimes hear about reputed healings of the deaf, blind, crippled, and afflicted. Apparently, these healings have occurred as the result of interventions by individuals, visits to shrines like Lourdes and Fatima, and even direct prayer. Announcement of such cures brings about a temporary increase of faith among some people. We are all affected by the out-of-the-ordinary. As in Christ's time, miracles make some people turn to God.

There is another type of healing that takes place daily, however. It does not occur in earth-shaking fashion, but very slowly and quietly. In many cases, the results are worth examining. Some of these healings occur at a place called St. Christopher's Inn at Graymoor, Garrison, N.Y. For many years the Atonement Friars at Graymoor have conducted a temporary shelter for homeless and needy men there. Father Paul Wattson, the founder of the Society of the Atonement at Graymoor, began giving shelter to homeless and needy men as early as 1909. As time passed, more and more men came to Graymoor seeking food, shelter, clothing, and assistance. Eventually, it was necessary to build new physical facilities to house and care for them.

Over the years, the reasons why men come to St. Christopher's Inn have changed. In the early days they were mostly homeless wanderers, seeking shelter and work. Today, they come for other reasons, most of them related to alcoholism. They suffer unemployment, loss of family, lack of prestige, poor health, and loss of self-respect. They come to the Inn seeking inner peace, answers to their problems, and self-affirmation. The years have taken their toll on them. They are usually experiencing deep inner suffering and turmoil. Their healing cannot come from hospitals or doctors but from elsewhere, sources

that can be found only in quiet, out-of-the-way places, where a man can think and pray.

At the Inn, the staff attempts to help each man find inner peace. We start by touching his body, by trying to alleviate some of the physical problems he has incurred because of excessive drink, the use of drugs, and poor eating habits. We practice the corporal works of mercy. Our guests see that we are really interested in them as human beings regardless of who they are. Men of all faiths — or none — benefit from genuine caring and begin once again to realize they are worth something. Thus, they are further motivated to do some soul-searching. Their wounds are healed little by little, and their strength returns gradually to the point at which they can begin to pursue meaningful goals. By external care, we convince them to seek internal care and inner healing. Inner healing brings the peace of mind that is essential for productive living.

We try to help all who come to us. Love of God is emphasized as the way toward recovery, and our guests are encouraged to find God. Many men receive far more than they first thought they wanted when they made their way to the "Holy Mountain," which Graymoor is called. There are many ways in which the men can be affected by the lives and work of the staff at the Inn. In an atmosphere of prayer and hard work, we have come to realize that our strength lies in sharing with others. We work with our men to restore their confidence in themselves and to lead them to a deeper relationship with God. In our work of healing, we can, by concern, compassion, and dialogue, help heal some of the strain which the men experience. As a nursing professional, for example, I can, while providing basic medical services to the men, talk to them about their problems. Through my medical ministry and conversation, I am able to show my concern for them. I use external healing to promote inner healing.

We have found that a direct confrontation when dealing with God is not always the best approach, especially when the men have more on their minds than God, or at least they think they do. External care is a means to an end, therefore, not just an end in itself. My own experience has been that a person is more open when he realizes one is interested in him as a member of God's family. When a man arrives at our doorstep, down-and-out, under-the-weather, complaining about a multitude of problems, his response is usually negative when someone suggests he has only to pray and all will be well. In this connection, we are reminded of the words of the Epistle of James: "My brothers! What good is it for a man to say, 'I have faith,' if his actions do not prove it? Can that faith save him? Suppose there are brothers or sisters who need clothes and don't have enough to eat. What good is there in you saying to them, 'God bless you! Keep warm and eat well!' if you don't give them the necessities of life? This is how it is with faith; if it is alone and has no actions with it, then it is dead" (James 2:14-17).

Talk is cheap when no action follows. Therefore, action is important and necessary in our role as internal healers. Total care is important, and we can provide that. We can give external care and build upon it, leading a person to the point at which he begins to believe in himself again. Jesus Himself usually forgave sins first and then healed the body. His was total healing. He was condemned for doing that, and it led Him to death. At St. Christopher's Inn, we reverse that procedure, although the effect is the same. We realize that by meeting the physical and spiritual needs of an individual, we are helping him reach his personal goals. He will also have permanent aid in trying to improve himself. What better way is there to put oneself in the healing hands of the Lord than to follow the A.A. way of life which advises its practitioners to live one day at a time? This rule actually applies to everyone. We can only live today, because it is now.

While living one day at a time, we must ask God for strength and guidance. Each day is dedicated to God, and the person puts trust in a Higher Power-God. The third and fourth steps of the A.A. program deal with the Higher Power. After trying everything and everybody, the person finally turns to God. As followers of Christ, we must use this same method in dealing with those who come to us. We must help them realize that they must have constant trust and faith in God. A man will be open to this sort of direction once he realizes that the person giving advice is sincere and dedicated to the task of helping him recover spiritually.

By our external concern and care for the men who come to St. Christopher's Inn, we can instill in them love and faith in God, thereby fostering the inner healing process. This means helping each individual become a whole person. There is a healing power which I believe is provided by the Holy Spirit if only we ask for that help. Through this power, we are able to help many who come to us to find the God of Love. In that way, too, we exemplify the theme of the 1981 Week of Prayer For Christian Unity: "A Variety Of Gifts But Always The Same Spirit" (1 Cor. 12: 3-13).
