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Christian Faith in Action

What The Gospel Tells Us

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¹A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. ²So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. ³Some men came, bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them. ⁴Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on. ⁵When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." ⁹... 'Get up, take your mat and walk'...

***Mark 2:1-5, 9b (parallel accounts in Matthew 9:1-8, Luke 5:17-26),
New International Version (NIV)***

This familiar story of Jesus' healing ministry should serve as a clear call for all those who engage in volunteer service and ministry. On this occasion, Jesus is visiting in a home in Capernaum. So many people wish to hear him speak and draw close to him that the house is full and long lines of people are waiting outside. There is a paralyzed man in town, and on this day four of his friends go to his home and carry him on his mat in the hope Jesus will heal him. When the four friends confront the long waiting lines they are not deterred. Knowing that they can't get to Jesus' healing presence through the door, they clamor onto the roof, dig through and lower their paralyzed friend to Jesus who heals the man, instructing him to "take your mat and walk."

The lessons of this story are both obvious and profound: Some people will never get to the healing presence without the voluntary assistance of others. Volunteers need to be resourceful and determined in order to overcome the obstacles that impede those they are trying to help. Most of all, it is their faith in Jesus and their belief that He can make all things new that motivates these volunteers to help their friend in need.

Prayers for the Journey

God of compassion, be with me today as I serve others in your name. Grant me the graces of patience, persistence and good cheer. Amen.

Lord of life, be with those we serve in this project. By your Spirit renew their hopes, their confidence and their peace. When they suffer pain, discouragement or fear stand by them and help them to feel your ever-present love. Amen.

O God, you have called your followers into service to the least, the last, the lost and the lonely. As I serve, renew in me a sense of that high calling of service. When I grow weary, refresh me

with a restored sense of calling and purpose in the name of the Good Shepherd. Amen.



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Hear my prayer, O Lord, for all those who serve in the healing professions. For doctors, nurses, technicians, therapists and aides. Be with them as they do their work, giving them energy, intelligence and love for the conduct of their efforts. Be too, with volunteers, family members, chaplains and others that tend the sick. May all who serve feel a sense of fellowship with one another and with you. Amen.

Prayers for Groups of Volunteers

In every age, O God, you raise up men and women and call them to tasks in faithfulness to you. Today you call us to service as volunteers. You call us to put our faith in action and in service to you. Strengthen and bless us in this service that we may everywhere and at all times serve you with diligence, kindness and patience. Bless our efforts that new hope may spring up and that those we serve may be encouraged and reminded of your sustaining love. In this and in all our striving we pray in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.

Today we dare, O Lord, to go in your name and on your behalf to serve modestly but faithfully by putting into action the love of our neighbors that you have taught us. Keep us in your care, give us hearts of compassion and minds filled with patience. Jesus, friend of those in need, guide us in our befriending of those in our day who need a little assistance and support. Help us walk with them, companioning them in times of sickness or sorrow. May we see your face in the faces of those we serve today, and remember you taught us that whenever we welcome the "least of these" we welcome you. Amen.

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