

Healed of a severe fever, Simon's mother-in-law gets up and immediately waits on Jesus and the other's in the household. Simon's mother-in-law was robbed of all her strength. When Jesus approached her, she was fully present to Jesus in her need. With the healing, she is grateful and wishes to respond with service to the community.

"She got up immediately and waited on them" (Luke 4:39). The word "waited" in English is actually diakonia in the original Greek text of Luke's Gospel. So, when she "waited on them" she was doing more than serving food, she was providing a ministry of service. We look beyond the immediate literal context to a larger context of the early church when there were no church buildings but there were Sunday gatherings in homes.

Each person is called to listen to God as Simon's mother-in-law did, and to recognize and be grateful for what God has done for us. We can show our gratitude in service to the church and service to others.

A couple of years ago, Pope Francis welcomed a group of artists to the Vatican. The group called themselves Diakonia (Service) of Beauty. The pope was appreciative of their artistic talents, truly a gift from God, and encouraged them to use those talents in service to humanity. The pope noted that society is often obsessed with consumption, but through their artistic gifts, each artist can be of service to one's neighbor and to all of humanity to help us see things in a different light.<sup>i</sup>

- A few days ago, I spoke of the artist Timothy Schmalz who had created a sculpture of Jesus as a homeless person on a park bench in Chicago. The sculpture is meant to help each of us recognize the eminent dignity of every human.
- Pope Francis encouraged the Diakonia of Beauty "to promote a culture of encounter, to build bridges between people, among peoples, in a world where so many walls are still raised for fear of others." In some of our American cities that have seen riots and the vandalism of property, young artists have taken their paints and brushes to the streets in order to show love and foster healing through their artwork.
- The Pope concluded with words of encouragement. "The Church relies on you to make the deep beauty of God's love visible and to allow each one to discover the beauty of being loved by God and bear witness to it in the attention shown to others, especially those who are excluded, wounded, and rejected in our societies." What a wonderful call to all artists.

Simon's mother-in-law was no artist, but the help she rendered to Jesus truly benefited the 'excluded, the wounded and rejected.'" No sooner had she rendered service and the multitude came to Jesus in search of healing. "At sunset, all who had people sick with various diseases brought them to him. He laid his hands on each of them and cured them" (Luke 4:40).

In the midst of the pandemic, I think many of us feel burdened by the worries upon us. We need Jesus' healing touch to help us respond with warmer hearts, with kinder words, with gentler responses. When I lived in Nome 30 years ago, a man was upset with one family in particular. He felt they were putting undue burdens on him and he turned a cold shoulder to offering any further help. A child in the family, offered him a very simple piece of art. The man was brought to tears. One might say he had worked himself into a severe fever. But the gift, healed him of his illness. His hardened heart was softened and returned to good health by the simple gesture of a child offering a tiny gift of art with no expectation of anything in return. "Blessed the people the Lord has chosen to be his own" (Psalm 33:12).

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<sup>i</sup> [vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2018-02/pope-to-arts-movement--make-god-s-love-visible-with-your-talents.html](http://vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2018-02/pope-to-arts-movement--make-god-s-love-visible-with-your-talents.html)