

## We do the living; Jesus does the sharing

We are usually well aware of the times when we've talked with friends or family on a deeper level than our usual daily chatter. We also know when we've talked about our Christian faith and someone's listened and considered what we had to say.

But is it possible that there are moments when God draws someone's attention to us, when they are affected by what we do or say, and we don't even know it's happening?

It occurred in the gospels. There are times when Jesus pointed to the faith and example of certain people whilst he taught, and the individuals concerned seemed to be unaware of what he had done.

Remember the centurion who wanted Jesus to heal his servant? Rather than talk to Jesus himself, the centurion had asked some of the Jewish elders to plead with Jesus on his behalf. Jesus replied that he would come to the centurion's house himself and heal his servant. But everyone, including the centurion, would have known that, strictly speaking, a Jew should not enter the house of a gentile, so the centurion sent friends to Jesus with a second message. "Sir, do not trouble yourself," the message read, "for I am not worthy that you should come under my roof; nor do I count myself fit to come to you; but just speak a word and my servant will be cured. For I myself am a man under orders, and I have soldiers under me, and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

Amazed at the centurion's reply, Jesus turned to the crowd that followed him and said, "I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith." He's telling the Jews that this uncircumcised foreigner can teach them something. Jesus even used the occasion to start sweeping the idea away that the kingdom was exclusively for the Jews. They thought the Messianic banquet was an invitation-only affair for themselves. It had never crossed their minds that any unclean Gentile would be there, let alone that they themselves might be excluded (Matthew 8:5-13, Luke 7:1-10).

Did the centurion ever know that Jesus had used his words to teach these Jews about a faith they didn't understand? After all, the centurion wasn't there in person at the time.

And what about the time when Jesus was dining with a Pharisee called Simon? A woman known for her immoral life "brought an alabaster jar of perfume, and as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them." Simon was watching all this going on

in scandalised disgust, which Jesus could see, so he used the occasion to teach this self-satisfied judgmental Pharisee a few things about sin, mercy and love. He pointed out to Simon that, unlike Simon himself, this woman knew her desperate need of forgiveness, and she'd demonstrated it by a self-effacing act of gratitude (Luke 7:36-50).

Now it's true that she was still present there with them, but in her distraught state, bent over Jesus' feet sobbing and preoccupied, was she even aware of Jesus' conversation with Simon? Did she know how he'd used her repentant, faith-filled response of love, and her search for assurance, to actually teach a man who was both a teacher and an elder in Israel?

Later on, during the last week of his life, Jesus faced unbridled hostility and some devious questioning from the scribes and Pharisees. He warned his disciples to beware of their prestige-seeking hypocrisy. Later, as they rested at the Gate Beautiful in the temple, he showed them how God looks on the heart.

From where they sat they could see the Court of the Women where there were thirteen collecting boxes for contributions for the daily sacrifices and expenses of the Temple. They were shaped like trumpets, narrow part at the top and the wider part at the foot, so coins would jangle satisfactorily as they fell to the bottom. Jesus and his disciples watched the rich throw in considerable amounts. Then came a widow who threw in a couple of mites. Two tiny coins would hardly be heard, and probably nobody even noticed either the woman or her offering. But Jesus did. Look at her, he said to the disciples, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on (Mark 12:41-44, Luke 21:1-4)."

How could this destitute woman passing by ever know that God himself used her example to teach men who would later become part of the very foundation of the church, and whose writings would form part of the word of God?

So here are three occasions when, for a brief moment, Jesus turned a spotlight on three very different people. They were all wonderful examples of faith, love and humble commitment, which Jesus then used to share with and teach others. You could say, then, that they did the living and Jesus did the sharing. And since Jesus doesn't change, it's quite possible that as we also live our lives in faith, love and humble commitment, that sometime, somewhere in our lives, and totally without us knowing either, Jesus may be using our lives to share and teach others, too. In other words, we do the living, but Someone Else may be doing the sharing!