

Coming out of the shadows..

We read in today's gospel passage about two very different people who approached Jesus Christ in different ways.

One was Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue. He is like your Pastoral council chair. He was an upstanding man in the Jewish community. His position indicates that he had a good reputation and was thought to be a righteous man.

The other person was very different. She was a woman. She had a medical condition. She had been hemorrhaging for twelve years, and had spent all her money on treatments that did not work. Not only was she now poor, she was also considered unclean because of the flow of blood.

She was isolated: anyone who had physical contact with her would also become unclean. She could not even enter the Temple or have a normal social life. She was an outcast, a pariah for twelve years, cut off from God and everyone else.

She could not touch anyone or be touched by anyone.

This woman lived in the shadows for 12 years. At one level of meaning, it is a dark metaphor. Shadow is that point between light and dark with the implication that it owes more to the dark than light.

Honest and straightforward people live their lives in full view (at least in theory according to this understanding of the shadow metaphor), while those with something to hide furtively live their lives on the margins in the shadows, unseen by those living their real lives honestly and above ground. She lived in the shadows for no wrong of her own.

And that is why, unlike Jairus, who spoke to Jesus face to face, this woman sneaks in from the back, and touches the fringe of Jesus garments.

"If only I could touch his garments, I would be made clean." Coming to Jesus face to face, to speak of her situation risked great humiliation and assault from the crowd that gathered around Jesus.

This woman is a symbol of everyone who lives in the shadows in our nation. Statistics reveal that there are over 11 million people in our nation living in the shadows.

People call them by different labels. Some call them illegal, others undocumented, and some of our leaders name them as a national threat.

Living under the constant threat of deportation, these brothers and sisters are less likely to take advantage of assistance their children may be eligible for, such as child-care subsidies, public preschool programs and food stamps.

At CTK, the number of the poor and homeless people coming to our Vincentians has drastically dropped.

There are others living in the shadows because of what they look like or where they come from. I am sure you have seen the YouTube videos of a little girl who was selling bottles of water to make some extra money for her vacation to go to Disneyland.

Her mother had lost her job. Another woman, who could have been her mother apparently called the police, intimidating this child and her mother. Why? This family apparently did not belong there.

Unfortunately so many similar videos are emerging these days. A black teenager, who was invited by his friend to a swimming pool, found himself battling another woman who was aggressive, assaulting the teen and telling him, "You don't belong here."

Yes. There are so many people living in the shadows in our nation. The most important message of the Gospel today is that in the eyes of God we are all precious children of God.

Jesus turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched my clothes?" How her heart must have pounded. She'd just stolen a miracle!

She risked everything—public humiliation, if not punishment—to make her confession of faith, explaining to the crowd "why she had touched him, and how she had been instantly healed" Jesus said to her, "Daughter, your faith has saved you."

It is an amazing story, where a woman who lived in the shadows for 12 years is called by a term of affection and endearment, "Daughter."

With a single word from Jesus, 12 years of pain and isolation were swept away: "Daughter ... "

She was no outcast in God's eyes. She was a member of the family now, restored to her community, setting an example for others who "begged him to let them touch even the edge of his cloak, and all who touched him were healed"

The most important miracle in this Gospel story is the miracle of restoring this woman who lived in shadows for 12 years back to her society, to her Temple in the full hearing of all the people who once despised her.

Of course, her physical healing was important. It was more important to restore this woman who was emotionally, societally and spiritually damaged for life back to being lovable and touchable again.

Dear friends, we who walk in the footsteps of Jesus must do the same. We must see everyone around us regardless of where they come from or what they look like or what they have done as a brother or sister or a daughter or a son.

Pope Francis said, "Migrants and refugees are not pawns on the chessboard of humanity. They are children, women and men who leave or who are forced to leave their homes for various reasons, who share a legitimate desire for knowing and having, but above all for being more."

In this week of July 4th, would like to conclude with a prayer, a poem by Rabindranath Tagore who prayed for true freedom for his country.

Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;

Where knowledge is free;

Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;

Where words come out from the depth of truth.

Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.