

One night this year I got a phone call around midnight. A family from the parish had gathered at a hospital because an elderly relative was not expected to live. I didn't recognize the name, so before I left for the hospital I checked the parish roster. We had no record of the woman in question, but obviously it was a local family in need, so I drove over. The woman was dying, so I anointed her at the family's request, but she was too sick to take communion. After talking with the family, I learned that the woman had been living in the parish for several years. She had been unable to come to church for some time. I felt sad because here was someone who could have had a communion minister come to her home every Sunday, and whom I could have anointed two or three times during her illness while she was well enough to rejoice in the sacraments. But we never knew she was here, and the family thought the appropriate time to call the priest was when she was dying, not while she was sick. The church's last rites have changed over the years, and now we like to pray for people when they're sick, but they'd never gotten the message, and didn't want to bother us.

Today's gospel tells the story of two people who had every reason not to bother Jesus, but they did, and it made all the difference. Jairus was a synagogue official. He had status. Jesus had none. He probably should have turned up his nose and ignored this upstart of a preacher. But Jesus could cure, and Jairus' daughter lay at death's door. So he swallowed his pride and asked Jesus for a miracle. On his way to see the daughter, Jesus is stopped by a woman whose hemorrhage has been flowing for twelve years. Her flow of blood makes her ritually unclean, and people she touches become unclean. This woman touches Jesus, like "Tag, you're it!" Neither Jairus nor the woman had any business bothering Jesus, but they did, and Jesus approved. What he liked was the faith which prompted them to ask.

God may not always grant the specific request we make, but he likes the request made in faith. When in doubt, ask, and give God a chance to reply.