

At first, the cure of Peter's mother-in-law seems to be the most selfish cure Jesus made. Early in his ministry, Jesus goes home with his new friend Peter. There they find Peter's mother-in-law sick with a fever. So Jesus cures her. What looks selfish is what Mark tells us happened next. The woman got up and began to wait on them. It sounds like they came in tired from the road and the easiest way to get some service at home was to cure the mother-in-law.

Actually, what's going on in that little story is a natural succession of events in the spiritual life. A woman has a fever. Jesus cures the fever. The woman serves Jesus. In the first stage she needs help. In the second she receives help. In the third she gives help. The story is a microcosm of the whole spiritual life. Stage 1: We need redemption from sin. Stage 2: We receive baptism. Stage 3: We help others by living out the Gospel. *election, Evh. 1-2, but there is 3*

These stages occur over and over in our lives. Some are more dramatic than others. We move from sickness to health, from loss to acceptance, and ultimately from death to life.

For example, I once met a woman who had suffered the loss of her brother. He died as a victim of criminal action. She felt angry and helpless that the brother she loved had left her so suddenly and violently. At the time of his death, she was at stage one, like Peter's mother-in-law with her fever, a woman who needed help. However, she did not remain there. With the help of family and friends she accepted the loss, and moved into stage 2--receiving help. Then something wonderful happened. All the anger and sorrow inside her grew into a positive driving force. She became a lobbyist for victims' rights so that people who lived through criminal activity suffered no further indignity. Here was stage 3. Now having been helped, she gave help to others in need.

We go through these stages often in life, and one reason I mention them to you is to help us prepare for Lent. If we're at stage 1 we may need help to get to stage 3. The danger is that we stay at the first stage, needing help, without seeing the vision of the third, giving help. Just getting over our sorrow isn't enough. In fact, helping others in need often helps us put stage 1 behind. (2)

Jesus was and is a healer of souls. He will guide our spiritual journey in the days ahead. This Lent let us seek the prayer, the counseling, the support, and the service which will make our Easter a day of spiritual victory.