

## Commentary on the Gospel for Wed, Apr 19th 2017

Today's readings continue to recount the amazing events that occurred following the resurrection of Jesus. In the first reading Peter and John are going to the temple as usual for the three o'clock hour of prayer. They come upon the crippled man who is placed at the gate of the temple every day to beg for alms. An ordinary day with predictable actions and events. But today is different; the outcome is anything but predictable. Today the miraculous occurs! It all starts with everyone paying attention. Everyone is "in the moment." Peter and John "look intently" at the beggar; the beggar "paid attention to them". And then the miraculous: in the name of Jesus, Peter tells him to "rise and walk". He takes the beggar's hand, helps him up, and immediately the man is healed! Although it isn't explicitly stated here, we can assume that Peter was also "paying attention" to an inner stirring - the presence of the healing spirit of the risen Christ moving through him, inviting him to reach out and take a risk.

The gospel story also begins with the account of an ordinary day. The disciples are walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus, conversing as they go, when Jesus joins them – yet, "their eyes were prevented from recognizing him." The disciples were not paying attention. Caught up in the events of the past, they give an account of the last few days to this poor man who must have been living under a rock to not have known what happened to Jesus. Caught up in worry for the future, they bemoan the loss of their leader, their loss of hope for Israel. It is only when Jesus blessed, broke and shared the bread that the disciples started paying attention. "Their eyes were opened and they recognized him."

These miraculous events occurred during the course of ordinary days. The act of paying attention – observing carefully, listening to what is said and what is unsaid, giving thoughtful consideration, noticing interior stirrings and reactions – that is what God asks of us in order for God to be present and active in our world.

Dogs are patient teachers of the art of paying attention. They watch our every movement, hang on every word, stare into our eyes waiting for the cue that it's time to eat, time to walk, time to sleep.

It's hard for us to let go of planning and rehearsing the future, rehashing the past, and the interior "noise" that fills our days. Doing something totally different can be a spiritual practice that "brings us to our senses." Project Homeless Connect was just that for many of us on campus last week. Besides the obvious – over 500 men and women receiving social, legal and medical services they might not have received otherwise – it was an opportunity for volunteers to step out of the routine of their usual day. There was no other agenda than to be present and attentive to each guest who came for medical care, assistance with housing, legal advice, a meal ...and human connection. From the stories of previous years, we know that many lives have been changed because of these encounters – both for guests and volunteers - some would say that the miraculous has occurred. It all starts with paying

attention to those around us and to what is stirring within us, listening for God's invitation.

Diane Jorgensen-Creighton University's School of Pharmacy