

Scripture Study

Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle B



Opening prayer

Isaiah 43:18-19, 21-22, 24b-25 (Ps 41:2-5, 13-14) 2 Corinthians 1:18-22 **Mark 2:1-12**

Overview of the Gospel:

- As we have seen in previous weeks, Jesus and his disciples have been traveling around the Galilee region preaching and healing (Mark 1: 39). This Sunday's Gospel reading finds him back in his adopted home of Capernaum (verse 1).
- As we also read in previous weeks, Jesus' reputation causes him to be thronged by large crowds wherever he goes. The house he is preaching in becomes so crowded that no one can get in (and probably out!) the door. A paralytic and his friends are so determined to see Jesus that they make an opening in the roof to lower him down to where he is (it is remarkable that it is the faith of the paralytic's friends rather than the faith of the paralytic alone that is cited in Jesus' decision to heal him). Jesus heals the man—but not before he forgives the man's sins!
- Today's reading also marks the beginning of a section in Mark's Gospel (to verse 3:6) that relates a series of conflicts between Jesus and his opponents leading to their plot to put him to death. When the scribes (scholars of the Jewish law) hear Jesus pronounce forgiveness for the man's sins they see Jesus as claiming a power that belongs to God alone (verses 6-7).
- Jesus not only doesn't deny this, but confirms the fact that even as a man, he has the power and authority of God (verses 9-11). His demonstration of his authority to forgive sins anticipates that same power which he will later pass on to the leaders of his Church (Matthew 9:6-8, 16:18-19; John 20:21-23).

Questions:

- In the 1st Reading, who provides the way for a new beginning? On whose initiative is it given? What should our response be to God, who is always offering his forgiveness?
- How often do you find that your faith vacillates between Yes and No—between on and off, hot and cold, zealous and slothful (2nd reading)? What tends to make you swing in one direction or the other? Have you found ways to strengthen your faith, so that it increasingly gravitates toward Yes? Have you ever been aware that the Spirit of God has actually been given to you? Of what is the Spirit a guarantee?
- In this Sunday's Gospel, what do you think you would be seeing and feeling if you were in this crowd (verses 1-4)? Do you identify more with the paralytic, his friends, or the scribes? Why? Why are the scribes so upset? In their minds, how are sin and the authority of God linked (see John 9:1-3)? Why didn't Jesus just heal the man in the way everyone expected? What new insight about himself and the kingdom of God is he revealing?
- In what ways is sin like paralysis? What freedoms has Jesus' word of forgiveness given to you, especially in the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession)? Where do you need to hear that word again?

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 589, 1441, 1484, 1502-1503

Closing prayer

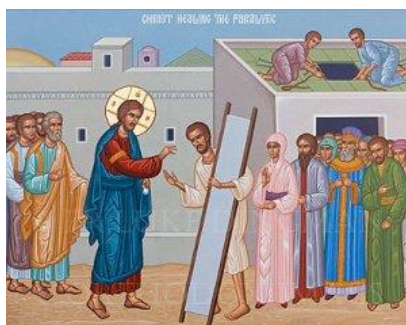
Confession heals, confession justifies, confession grants pardon of sin, all hope consists in confession; in confession there is a chance for mercy. ~ St. Isidore of Seville

Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings!

"We never saw anything like this!"

Scripture: Mark 2:1-12

And when he returned to Caper'na-um after some days, it was reported that he was at home. And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room for them, not even about the door; and he was preaching the word to them. And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and when they had made an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic lay. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "My son, your sins are forgiven." Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, "Why does this man speak thus? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, "Why do you question thus in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your pallet and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins" -- he said to the paralytic -- "I say to you, rise, take up your pallet and go home." And he rose, and immediately took up the pallet



and went out before them all; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"

Meditation: Do you know the healing power of forgiveness and reconciliation? Jesus' treatment of sinners upset the religious teachers of the day. When a cripple was brought to Jesus because of the faith of his friends, Jesus did the unthinkable. He first forgave the man his sins. The scribes regarded this as blasphemy because they understood that only God had authority to forgive sins and to unbind a man from his burden of guilt. Jesus claimed an authority which only God could rightfully give. Jesus not only proved that his authority came from God, he showed the great power of God's redeeming love and mercy by healing the cripple of his physical ailment. This man had been crippled not only physically, but spiritually as well. Jesus freed him from his burden of guilt and restored his body as well. The Lord is every ready to bring us healing of

soul, body, and mind. Do you allow anything to keep you from Jesus?

Clement of Alexandria, a 3rd century church father comments on this passage: "The physician's art, according to Democritus, heals the diseases of the body; wisdom frees the soul from its obsessions. But the good Instructor, Wisdom, who is the Word of the Father who assumed human flesh, cares for the whole nature of his creature. The all-sufficient Physician of humanity, the Savior, heals both body and soul conjointly. 'Stand up,' he commanded the paralytic; 'take the bed on which you lie, and go home'; and immediately the paralytic received strength." Do you look to the Lord with expectant faith for wholeness of body, mind, and soul?

"Lord Jesus, through your merciful love and forgiveness you bring healing and restoration to body, soul, and mind. May your healing power and love touch every area of my life—my innermost thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and memories. Pardon my offences and transform me in the power of your Holy Spirit that I may walk confidently in your truth and righteousness."

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