

## **SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME 2006/B**

From all the peoples on earth, the Israelites have been the most blessed by God. Out of love God has chosen their ancestors; he has taken care of them as someone does with his own children by intervening in many ways in their lives to save them. Despite this particular solicitude of God, Israel has been unfaithful and unable to show in turn the same love to God. Hence, the innumerable misfortunes and exile that the people had in their history. It is like that they try to read themselves their own history.

The consequence of such a misfortune has led the people to underestimate themselves, to think that God is angry with them, that he will never forgive them their sins. They think that the happy days they have had in the past are just a mere souvenir that will never come again in their way. It is in the middle of this situation that the word of God is sent to them through the prophet Isaiah.

God replies to these rejected and dispirited people: “Stop – he says – pondering on your past as if I did not have compassion for the oppressed and were unable to intervene in support of my people. See! I am now on the point of performing a liberation far superior to the one brought about in the ancient times. I will open up a way through the desert to lead you home, and I will make rivers flow in wastelands to quench your thirst during the journey home”.

The gloomy situation of Israel in exile is what happens to those who follow their whims and passions, stray from the ways of God, and become slaves to sin; they keep sinking deeper and deeper and cannot see any way out of their state. What to do then? Isaiah instructs that in order to pass successfully through the difficult moments, we need to remember what God has done in the ancient times. If he could not allow somebody to be reduced to slavery, was not he capable of freeing those oppressed by their sins? In other words, God is always the liberator and the creator; he will once again work extraordinary wonders for those who, renouncing their sins, call upon him.

Another thing we learn from this text is that there is no sin, no matter how serious, that cannot be wiped out by the love of God. No situation is so desperate that he cannot put it straight once again. We may be unfaithful to him, but he remains faithful to us. No evil or wicked action will stop God from loving us, his children. Like a child, we may fall every moment, but God, like a father, never tires of helping us back to our feet again. His faithfulness endures forever. His yes to us lasts forever; says Paul in the 2<sup>nd</sup> reading.

Because God is faithful to his promise and his love, he saves beyond what a human being can imagine; he saves beyond our sins and offenses. It is this God's fidelity that makes Jesus acting by saving the paralytic in today's Gospel.

The paralytic represents the whole of humanity that is separated from God and cannot reach salvation; he represents each of us who at times does not know what to do in order to go to Jesus and to get rid of our sins. The healing can only come from above, as a God's gift. This is what embarrasses the scribes. They believe that God may forgive, but they are sure that a human being must merit forgiveness by praiseworthy declarations, promises of amendment, and exemplary behavior.

Instead, Jesus proclaims that God takes initiative and offers pardon to people without setting any preliminary conditions. Not that God covers up "the mistakes and faults committed" as though he does not see the evil. On the contrary, he forgives by transforming the heart of people interiorly, by curing them of their moral diseases, and making them good. In other words, what the Gospel of today teaches us is that conversion is not the work of a person; it is God's gift.

Another thing which scandalizes the Pharisees is the fact that God brings about "liberation from sin" from the Son of man, that is through a man. This incident is very important for us: it teaches us what to do in the presence of sinners and sick. As a matter of fact, it is through human beings and through the word of salvation proclaimed in the Christian community that sinners can be today brought back to life. Sinners are unable to walk to Christ by themselves; they need to be helped by other people who already know and believe in the salvific force of the word of Jesus.

In the same way, the paralytic of today's Gospel would never have reached Jesus if his four friends had not taken him there. This shows us how in the realm of salvation we count on one another, how we are all mediators for one another before God. Are not there people who would like to rebuild their lives, if they found a true friend to lead them to Jesus?

What we should not forget also is that we all need salvation, but in our way to Jesus, there are many obstacles and setbacks. However, we should not be discouraged. It is up to us to invent the means and the ways to reach him. The fact of opening the roof by the four friends to bring the paralytic to Jesus is an invitation that we pass-by impediments and obstructions to acquire our salvation. Let us pray that the Lord may give us enough strength and courage to do anything we can to have our salvation. Let us ask him to pour out his Holy spirit in our hearts so that we may help each other in the realm of our salvation.



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