

7th Sunday in Ordinary Time B/2009

Never in the history of humanity has God been as gracious as he was with the people of Israel. Out of love he chose their ancestors and made Israel his own people. When the Israelites were in slavery in Egypt, he set them free and led them to the Promised Land. He made a Covenant with them and sent them the prophets to teach them what was right and pleasing to him.

In spite of all this, Israel forgot the good deeds of God and went on sinning. Thus, instead of freedom, they found themselves time and time again in exile. The truth, however, is that human beings sometimes become wise when they are overwhelmed with difficulties and problems. That is exactly what happened to Israel.

In fact, as Israel went through repeated negative experiences of life, the people came to remember with nostalgia what God did for them in the past. They realized that if they have been brought so down, it was because of their sins. But, could God forgive them? Could he forget their infidelity and their many sins?

To these interrogations, Isaiah answered with a new prospect of prosperity, peace and forgiveness from God. As we heard in the first reading, God reassured the Israelites that he is not a God of the past, but a God who does something new. He makes a new way in the desert and rivers flow in the wasteland. Even if his people grew weary and burned him with their sins, he will wipe away their sins forever and not remember them anymore.

As St Paul said in the second reading, God is able to do all that because he is a faithful and a merciful God. He is not like human beings who say one time “yes” and another time “no”. He is permanently faithful to his promise and his love. He is a God who saves beyond human weaknesses and offenses. His “yes” to us is perpetual. While human beings easily change their opinion and rebel against him, God remains faithful and merciful toward us.

It is that mercy and that fidelity of God that pushes Jesus to heal the paralytic in today's Gospel. The power with which Jesus heals is the power of his Father. The attitude Jesus has by dealing with the sick and the needy is that of his Father. He looks at the world with the eyes of the Father and hears the cry of the world with the ears of his Father. Jesus conveys to men and women God's forgiveness and, thereby, heals them from their infirmities. Through Jesus the Father acts, forgives and heals.

As presented, today's Gospel has a lot to teach us with regard to our relationship with God and with regard to the growth of our faith. The healing of this paralytic is the symbol of what faith can do when we are persevering and daring in our prayer before God. First of all, we have this fantastic and daring attitude of these people who open up the roof in order to bring the sick to Jesus. It is clear that, given the presence of the crowd that obstructed the entrance to the door, if this guy did not have these friends to bring him to Jesus, he would have never reached him.

This episode teaches us that our relationship with God passes sometimes through the mediation of our brothers and sisters. In fact, without our parents, teachers, priests, catechists, and even friends, who introduced us to Christian faith, we would have perhaps remained ignorant of God's deeds and saving power.

This episode teaches us also that the process of faith is not always easy. Sometimes we meet obstacles and blockages in our way. In such circumstances, we need good friends and brothers who can bring us to Jesus in their prayer, or who can help us see clearly where we have failed and how we can get rid of our problems in order to encounter Jesus. Plus, when we are sick, we need the healing. But, in order to be healed, we have to come close to Jesus. It happens sometimes that we need people who can guide us and help us come close to Jesus for that healing we need. Here we see the responsibility we have for one another when it comes to our salvation. We should never let our brothers live in isolation or fight alone without receiving our help.

Another point I would like to highlight is the forgiveness Jesus gave to the paralytic when he said, "Child, your sins are forgiven". These words of Jesus are astonishing, because this guy came in search of physical healing and not for something else. But, there is a point here. In fact, by forgiving first the sins before the physical healing, Jesus shows us that the interior healing is more important than the physical one. Sometime it is when we are reconciled with God through the forgiveness of our sins that we obtain the physical healing. We tend sometimes to ignore this truth.

A last point I would like to stress is summarized in these words of Jesus: "Rise, pick up your mat and walk". With Jesus, the power of God is in action. Jesus is not only the one who forgives the sins; he gives the plenitude of salvation. With him a new dawn has arrived in our world. He changes the destiny of those who come to him for healing. He gives a chance for leading a new life. He makes people stand and walk. The sick one knows well that, though forgiven from his sins, because of his human nature he has to keep fighting, but with the grace of the Holy Spirit he has entered a new life, with new strengths. We pray that Jesus helps us understand the responsibility we have for one another with regard to our eternal salvation. We ask him to forgive us our sins by healing us in body and in spirit. May God bless you!

Isaiah 43, 18-19, 21-22, 24b-25; 2 Corinthians 1, 18-22; Mark 2, 1-12



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