

Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time B/2012

The readings of this Sunday talk about the power and faithfulness of God. They invite us to trust God's faithfulness and power that never fails us. They show us how God in his bounty is able to re-create our world, to heal our diseases and to forgive our sins.

The first reading of the book of Isaiah is related to the history of Israel and recalls the meander of their relationship with God. It shows that, in spite of the good deeds done to them, Israel was unfaithful to God. However, instead of rejecting them for their crimes and sins, God remained faithful and saved them. That is why he promises that he will recreate everything that exists, the land as well as the people, so that they do not remember anything from the past.

What is behind this text is the idea that God is merciful and forgiving. Whatever might be the sins of his people, he is always ready to forgive us. His forgiveness and mercy go beyond human imagining to the point that he makes anew all that human sin has destroyed. Therefore, no situation can be so desperate that God cannot raise it again, and no one can be so down that God cannot lift him up again. Because he is permanently faithful to his promise, his "yes" to us is perpetual and eternal, as St Saint Paul said in the second reading.

All that helps understand what is at stake in today's Gospel as Jesus heals the paralytic who is brought to him by a couple of friends. First of all, the Gospel says that when Jesus came back to Capernaum and the people knew about it, they came to him in great numbers. Then, he preached to them.

At that moment, four men brought a paralytic they carried so that Jesus might heal him. As they could not come where Jesus was because of the crowd, they opened the roof and put him down in the presence of Jesus. After having seen their faith, Jesus declared to the paralytic that his sins were forgiven, while the scribes criticized him for having said so.

In reaction to their secret thoughts, Jesus commanded the sick to walk in the presence of everybody while the crowd, amazed about what happened with that healing, was glorifying God.

What do we learn about this Gospel? The first thing we learn is about the importance of mediation. It is obvious in today's Gospel that, if the paralytic did not have friends at all, he would never have the opportunity to reach Jesus. In fact, God has created us differently gifted and has put us in contact with one another so that we might help each other. For that reason, we bear some responsibility for the salvation of one another.

In that sense, we are all mediators for one another before God. We have to care for one another, as well as we have to count on one another in order to succeed in life. This is true not only for the daily life, but also for our spiritual life. For instance, we would certainly have failed in our spiritual growth and in our way to salvation, if we did not receive substantial help from our parents, teachers, priests, catechists, and even good friends, who introduced us to Christian faith.

The second thing we learn is about the importance of perseverance. In fact, it is really striking to see that when the four friends could not find a way to come to Jesus because

of the crowd, they opened the roof above him. What a lesson of courage and perseverance, but also what a lesson of imagination! As human experience has taught us, nothing is given easily in life. We have to own it and we have to deserve it. What it means, in fact, is that we have to triumph over obstacles and difficulties in order to succeed. Only those who have enough imagination and enough courage are capable of overcoming obstacles and difficulties. The same is true about our salvation, in that if we do not force ourselves, we will never get there.

The third point I would like to bring is about the priority of internal healing over physical healing. What strikes in this Gospel is the fact that the paralytic who came to Jesus was in need of a physical healing, but instead Jesus starts with the forgiveness of sin. Why? In fact, by forgiving the sins, first, before the healing, Jesus shows us that the internal 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 are longing for. That is why we should never forget in our sickness to reconcile first with God and with our brothers and sisters, before seeking for the physical healing.

The last point I would like to talk about is the power of mind over the body. It is true that in this Gospel Jesus refutes the connection the Jews make between sin and disease. In the same way, we should avoid the same mistake by associating sin with disease, because human experience has taught us that even holy people can get sick and die.

However, it is important to remind us that sometimes the sickness of mind has some impact on our body. In the same way, a sin can sometimes lead our body to sickness.

The best case I recall here is about a young girl who once had an abortion and without the knowledge of her parents. As she was from a respectful family, she did not want to spoil the honor of her family. The fight to keep the secret of what happened to her made her physically sick to the point that she was collapsing without any apparent reason.

The medical examination did not reveal any symptom that would presuppose why she was continually collapsing. When a charismatic priest was brought in to pray for her, it was revealed to him by the power of the Holy Spirit that the young girl had had an abortion.. Asked about it, she recognized the fact, confessed her sins and was completely healed from her sickness. This shows how sometimes the mind has power over the body.

Let us pray, then, that Jesus may heal us bodily and spiritually from all our diseases and sickness. Let us ask him to help us understand the responsibility we bear for one another with regard to our eternal salvation. May God bless you all!

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



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Contact: www.mbala.org

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