

Fifth Week of Lent
Jesus Heals the Paralytic
March 21, 2010

Every week we put our garbage out for collection. If we didn't put it out, it would build up and begin to smell and become a mess to deal with. We know that we need to put out our garbage regularly or we will have problems. But there are also other pieces of trash that we pick up during our lives that we need to dispose of also. Those pieces of trash are "sins" we commit. We also need to put that trash "out for collection". How do we do that? By the sacrament of reconciliation. Friday night Monsignor Alfred, in his reflection, spoke about sin. He asked if there are "little sins" and "big sins", if some sins are more grievous than others. The answer is, as he said, all sins are offenses against God and therefore we must ask for them to be forgiven.

It is interesting that in the Gospel today, Mark says that Jesus firstly forgives the paralytic of his sins and only then does he heal him of his paralysis. Jesus knew that man, as we all do, needed interior healing before physical healing. He had to be treated from the inside out. And the most important healing is the interior healing, and the interior healing that the man needed was forgiveness.

As I said in my homily three weeks ago regarding the cleansing of the leper, all here today will hear something different in the words I am saying. And that is good. Some may not like what they hear, but that is only because they know these words are true and by not accepting them, they will not have to change their lives by asking for God's forgiveness.

In last week's homily, Msgr. Alfred said "the Church proclaims this parable to us in the midst of this Lent, not to entertain us, but to hold a mirror to us". This is so true of all of the Gospels of Lent. We must look beyond the "story of the parable" and understand that we must ask for God's forgiveness, not just during Lent, but everyday of our lives. Remember, in Hebrews 13:8 it says "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever". But our lives change every day due to the world around us. The economy, our jobs, our children, our families, etc., but we must remain faithful to the "Laws of God", the Ten Commandments, which I feel can be summed up in the first two. "Love the Lord thy God" and "Love your neighbor as yourself". If we can do this, then forgiveness will not be necessary in our lives, but we all know that each and every one of us does not live by His Commandments.

When we walk through the front doors of our Church every Sunday, do we have love, compassion, forgiveness in our hearts for everyone here in Church and everyone who is in our life on a daily basis. I know we do not. No one is immune from sin, no one is perfect except God Himself. That is why we must try every day to emulate Him. He does not change EVER! He is consistent in His love for us and is always willing to forgive us of our sins, but we must ask Him. His healing grace does not come without asking. And that is why reconciliation is so important, not just during Lent, but all year long. It is not the priest we meet in the confessional, it is Jesus we meet, and it is He who heals us during the sacrament. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could see our souls being cleansed each time we receive the sacrament of reconciliation?

Every Friday during Lent, we have Mass, the Stations of the Cross and Benediction. Last Friday as I was reading the Stations, I thought about the Cross that Jesus carried as our sins. And remember, He fell three times under the weight of our sins, but He knew that He must carry them to His death so that in His Resurrection, our sins will be forgiven.

So in addition giving up drinking soda pop or alcohol or not eating chocolate this Lenten Season, let's spend the remaining few weeks of Lent in forgiving our neighbors. I, for one, want to be ready every day of my life to meet God and I know that if I am carrying a "sin" in my heart that I must be forgiven by God while I am here on earth. Are you ready to meet God today? If you are, then God bless you, but if you have one sin of jealousy or anger or envy or greed or arrogance within your heart, as written in Mark 7:22, then those are the sins that need forgiveness by God's Grace. And I assure you, we all have these in our hearts at one time or another and that is why we must ask for His forgiveness.

In closing, let me say that forgiving sins, as Jesus did for the paralytic, is more difficult than healing him of his paralysis, even more difficult than creating Heaven and earth, for nothing is more contrary to God than sin. So let us leave here today wanting to get rid of that trash that we keep collecting. Let us ask both God and our neighbor for forgiveness. To repeat the words of Msgr. Alfred from last week, "Forgiveness is truly the sweetest revenge. It can turn an enemy into a friend. It can free a heart from the chains of anger, hatred and pain. It can bring you back to oneness with God in everything you think, feel and do. Pray every morning, "Lord help me to forgive, help me to give, and help me to love my neighbor as myself.

May God continue to Bless us all this Lenten Season.

Amen

Deacon John Alan Sfire