

13. January 2023

“We have never seen anything like this!”

Mk 2:1-12

*When he returned to Capernaum, some time later word went round that he was in the house; and so many people collected that there was no room left, even in front of the door. He was preaching the word to them when some people came bringing him a paralytic carried by four men, but as they could not get the man to him through the crowd, they stripped the roof over the place where Jesus was; and when they had made an opening, they lowered the stretcher on which the paralytic lay. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, 'My child, your sins are forgiven.' Now some scribes were sitting there, and they thought to themselves, 'How can this man talk like that? He is being blasphemous. Who but God can forgive sins?' And at once, Jesus, inwardly aware that this is what they were thinking, said to them, 'Why do you have these thoughts in your hearts? Which of these is easier: to say to the paralytic, "Your sins are forgiven" or to say, "Get up, pick up your stretcher and walk"? But to prove to you that the Son of man has authority to forgive sins on earth' -- he said to the paralytic-'I order you: get up, pick up your stretcher, and go off home.' And the man got up, and at once picked up his stretcher and walked out in front of everyone, so that they were all astonished and praised God saying, 'We have never seen anything like this.'*

Together with Jesus, we rejoice to see the faith of those people, thanks to which the Lord was able to heal the paralytic. Their faith was so strong and concrete that they removed all obstacles until the paralytic found himself in front of Jesus. It was not only the faith of the sick man, but also the faith of those who brought him to the Lord, even if they had to open a hole in the roof.

This is an important lesson: we can also believe in representation for others and intercede on their behalf... Faith, as a theological virtue, lies in the conviction that God is able and willing to intervene. Faith is grounded first and foremost in God Himself, rather than in the need that a person may be experiencing, however pressing and urgent it may be... The faith of those four men is based on the certainty that the Lord will act concretely. They have great faith! And the Lord responds to it...

However, their first response is different from what was expected. Jesus begins with the priority: He forgives sins. What an immense blessing for people not to have to die with their sins, to have the enormous weight of their guilt lifted from them, for hope to be restored, for the soul to be purified, for man to receive his dignity back from God and to be freed from the slavery of sin!

Indeed, it is sin that paralyses a person; that usurps his or her beauty; that prevents him or her from doing good willingly, completely and immediately; that prevents God from fully penetrating the person and dwelling in him or her... It is sin that obscures the true image of the human person, which is meant to reflect God. It is therefore an offence to God and a great injustice against Him who so wonderfully created humankind, crowning them with glory and dignity (cf. Ps 8:6).

Therefore, the first thing the Lord grants the paralytic is the immeasurable benefit of the forgiveness of sins, in order to free him also from his spiritual chains.

Some scribes are scandalised by this, for they have not understood that Jesus is the Son of God Himself, Who has come to them. So they are in danger of closing their hearts. But Jesus goes out to meet them... He can read their hearts. This is another immense grace that is given to us in the encounter with Jesus! He sees the innermost depths and knows our heart; He knows what is in it and helps us to discover it too! There is no need to be afraid, because Jesus did not come to condemn us, but to save us.

We know very little of our heart, and until we ask the Holy Spirit for His light, we will remain in the dark about our deepest motivations. We may believe that we do this or that for this or that reason, but not infrequently other motives are at work, of which we are not well aware or not at all conscious.

So today's gospel gives us several important clues: it calls us to a firm faith; it teaches us that, with our faith, we can intercede for others; it invites us to rejoice in the forgiveness of sins that God grants and to praise Him with gratitude. It is also a call to open our hearts to God, without fear, so that all thoughts that are not yet in His light may be corrected by Him. Finally, as we see the healing of the paralytic, let us join in the acclamation and praise of the crowd, "*We have never seen anything like this!*"