

6. July 2023

## Jesus forgives sins

Mt 9:1-8

*'He got back in the boat, crossed the water and came to his home town. And suddenly some people brought him a paralytic stretched out on a bed. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, 'Take comfort, my child, your sins are forgiven.' And now some scribes said to themselves, 'This man is being blasphemous.' Knowing what was in their minds Jesus said, 'Why do you have such wicked thoughts in your hearts? Now, which of these is easier: to say, "Your sins are forgiven," or to say, "Get up and walk"? But to prove to you that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins,' - then he said to the paralytic-'get up, pick up your bed and go off home.' And the man got up and went home. A feeling of awe came over the crowd when they saw this, and they praised God for having given such authority to human beings.'*

Forgive sins! The scribes recognised the essential thing that Jesus came to bring to mankind. And they were right when they said that only God can forgive sins (cf. Lk 5:21). But the decisive question would be who this Jesus really is: is He blaspheming, doing things that only God can do; or is Jesus not only a rabbi, but God Himself?

This is the key question they must have asked, and Jesus did everything to convince them. In this case, He worked before their eyes the miracle of the healing of the paralytic, to confirm that He also had the authority to forgive sins: *"...To prove to you that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins"*.

As a result of this miracle, the people who had witnessed it began to glorify God. In contrast, as far as we can tell from the gospels, most of the Pharisees and scribes closed their hearts to Jesus, so that they could not recognise their Messiah and the Son of God.

What a great gift it is that God heals and forgives sins! How many people need to bring their sins before Him in order to receive His forgiveness! But there are so many who do not yet know the Lord and do not know how close God wants to be to them, living together in a living relationship of love.

How can we make people understand the truth of the gospel? However good and important the corporal works of mercy may be, they are not enough. A Mother Teresa of Calcutta, whose witness of neighbourly love shone out to the world, said: that the greatest tragedy of the Indian people is that they do not know Jesus Christ. This counts for the whole of humanity! And of those who have already received the proclamation of the gospel, it could be said: “The greatest tragedy is that the gospel is not accepted to the extent that it transforms our lives”. Hence the tragedy of apostasy!

We see, then, that the call to evangelisation and the new evangelisation is urgent. But the passage we have read today teaches us that not everyone will accept the Lord, no matter how evident the truth of the gospel may be.

Let us not be discouraged by the rejection and indifference we may encounter! The Lord Himself gave us an example! In spite of so much hostility and rejection, He fulfilled His mission to the end, to offer us new life in Himself and to achieve forgiveness of sins for all men.

Although we humans can and must forgive each other's faults, it must be kept in mind that in every sin there is a rebellion and unfaithfulness against God, which only He can forgive.

It is therefore all the more important that we help people to get to know God and to enter into an authentic relationship with Him. This requires a real encounter with Jesus. The Church's dialogues, whether with other religions or Christian denominations, or with the atheistic world, or with science, will only make sense if they open the doors to the truth. On the other hand, they will not be fruitful if they obscure the truth or relativise it, as if the message of Christ were on the same level as the teachings of other religions or belief systems.

It is precisely the forgiveness of sins that essentially distinguishes Christianity from other religions. Only the Son of God can forgive sins, which is why it is essential that all people know the Gospel. For our part, let us make regular use of the gift of forgiveness which is given to us in Christ; and let us help others to find the way to the Lord, so that they too may receive the grace of redemption and be saved.