

**7<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle B**  
**February 22, 2009**

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

**Do Something New, Something Better**

*“Thus says the Lord: Remember not the events of the past, the things of long ago consider not; see, I am doing something new!”* These words from the prophet Isaiah start off our first reading this morning. And they are very important words for us to consider, especially as we get ready to start the Lenten season this week on Ash Wednesday. Lent is not a time to look to the past and dwell on our mistakes and transgressions; it’s about looking to the future and building a closer relationship with the Lord. God wants us to do something new, something better.

God speaks through Isaiah and says: *“It is I, I, who wipe out, for my own sake, your offenses; your sins I remember no more.”* God has the power to forgive our sins. He is willing to do it; He wants to do it. When we repent and try to turn away from sinful ways, God will heal our spirits, our souls. And Jesus shows us this morning in our gospel story how much more important it is that we have spiritual healing than physical healing. Of course He cares about our physical suffering, but He is more interested that we have clean souls that will spend eternity with Him in heaven.

The paralytic and his four friends came to Jesus because of their faith in Jesus and in his power. Jesus rewards their faith by telling the paralytic that His sins are forgiven. This is what is of highest importance. The miracle of his physical healing, so that the paralytic could pick up his mat and walk away, was almost secondary. The Pharisees had accused Jesus of blasphemy because they rightfully knew that only God could forgive sins. But they didn’t want to recognize or admit that Jesus was God. They were not humble like the paralytic and his friends and all the others that came to Jesus in good faith. The Pharisees came to Jesus to criticize Him and to try to entrap Him and discredit Him in front of the people. They were upset and envious because the people were listening to Jesus and not to them.

As we prepare to symbolically begin our Lenten journey through the desert with fasting, prayer, and almsgiving, I think we can benefit by reflecting on the behavior of the paralytic’s friends. We can see of course their great faith, but we also can see the great sacrifices they were unselfishly willing to make to help a friend. They were almsgivers, in effect. They wanted to help someone in need.

And this helps bring into focus another aspect of our spiritual healing. We not only try to reconcile with God, but we also try to reconcile with our family, friends, and our community. We are all part of the Body of Christ. We each must do our part to reconcile ourselves with that body to make it strong. It needs to be strong to fight the battles against Satan in our world; we need each other’s help to fight temptations and attacks on our spiritual health. We cannot fight by ourselves; we need the strength and guidance of the Church. And the Church needs our committed support and unity of purpose.

As you plan your activities for Lent, do not try to do it all alone. Look for some activities you can do with friends and family. Pray the rosary together with your family, or on Tuesday night together with members of our church. Come on Friday evenings and

walk the way of the Cross and reflect on Christ's passion along with your fellow parishioners. We have our beautiful new Stations mounted on the walls around the church. Fast together as a family; give up some things in common so that you can give each other strength and encouragement. And look for some way that you can work together to help someone in need in our community.

You will build up the Body of Christ and make it stronger along with making yourself spiritually stronger. You will draw closer and heal your relationship with Jesus Christ the Head of that Body. Do not dwell on the scars of past wounds to your relationships with Jesus and His Church, but look to spiritual health for the future. Look to new and better relationships.

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**Deacon Joe Hulway**