

February 22, 2009

## Seventh Sunday of Ordinary Time

### Reading 1

[Is 43:18-19, 21-22, 24b-25](#)

Thus says the LORD:  
Remember not the events of the past,  
the things of long ago consider not;  
see, I am doing something new!  
Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?  
In the desert I make a way,  
in the wasteland, rivers.  
The people I formed for myself,  
that they might announce my praise.  
Yet you did not call upon me, O Jacob,  
for you grew weary of me, O Israel.  
You burdened me with your sins,  
and wearied me with your crimes.  
It is I, I, who wipe out,  
for my own sake, your offenses;  
your sins I remember no more.

### Responsorial Psalm

[Ps 41:2-3, 4-5, 13-14](#)

R. (5b) **Lord, heal my soul, for I have sinned against you.**  
Blessed is the one who has regard for the lowly and the poor;  
in the day of misfortune the LORD will deliver him.  
The LORD will keep and preserve him;  
and make him blessed on earth,  
and not give him over to the will of his enemies.  
R. **Lord, heal my soul, for I have sinned against you.**  
The LORD will help him on his sickbed,  
he will take away all his ailment when he is ill.  
Once I said, "O LORD, have pity on me;  
heal me, though I have sinned against you."  
R. **Lord, heal my soul, for I have sinned against you.**  
But because of my integrity you sustain me  
and let me stand before you forever.  
Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,  
from all eternity. Amen. Amen.  
R. **Lord, heal my soul, for I have sinned against you.**

### Reading II

[2 Cor 1:18-22](#)

Brothers and sisters:  
As God is faithful,  
our word to you is not "yes" and "no."  
For the Son of God, Jesus Christ,  
who was proclaimed to you by us, Silvanus and Timothy and me,  
was not "yes" and "no," but "yes" has been in him.  
For however many are the promises of God, their Yes is in him;  
therefore, the Amen from us also goes through him to God for glory.  
But the one who gives us security with you in Christ  
and who anointed us is God;  
he has also put his seal upon us  
and given the Spirit in our hearts as a first installment.

## **Gospel**

[Mk 2:1-12](#)

When Jesus returned to Capernaum after some days,  
it became known that he was at home.  
Many gathered together so that there was no longer room for them,  
not even around the door,  
and he preached the word to them.  
They came bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men.  
Unable to get near Jesus because of the crowd,  
they opened up the roof above him.  
After they had broken through,  
they let down the mat on which the paralytic was lying.  
When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic,  
"Child, your sins are forgiven."  
Now some of the scribes were sitting there asking themselves,  
"Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming.  
Who but God alone can forgive sins?"  
Jesus immediately knew in his mind  
what they were thinking to themselves,  
so he said, "Why are you thinking such things in your hearts?  
Which is easier, to say to the paralytic,  
'Your sins are forgiven,'  
or to say, 'Rise, pick up your mat and walk?'  
But that you may know  
that the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins on earth"  
—he said to the paralytic,  
"I say to you, rise, pick up your mat, and go home."  
He rose, picked up his mat at once,  
and went away in the sight of everyone.  
They were all astounded  
and glorified God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this."

# HOMILY

Today's readings offer us another snapshot of the qualities that characterize the God we believe in. In this early part of Ordinary Time this year, we once again reflect on who our God is and, as a corollary, who we are in relationship to our God.

As a foreshadow of the Lent we begin this week, we are portrayed in these readings as sinners. We are a people plagued by forgetfulness of our God who saved us, by inattention to the truly important elements of life, by self-preoccupation and a lack of awareness of God's presence to us. In other words, we are a pretty foolish, dense, and woolly lot.

Because of this all too human condition or maybe on account of it, we tend to shrink our vision and understanding of God. We learned from the Baltimore Catechism and in religious education classes that we are made in God's image and likeness. And so we return the favor and make God into our image and likeness. No matter what we read and study in the Sacred Scriptures, we revert to childhood images of God which haunt our adult lives.

The Anglican scripture scholar, J. B. Phillips, wrote a small, little book that is well worth our reflection. The title is Your God Is Too Small. The first half of the book describes destructive, unreal understandings of God. Which one or how many of these images are yours: God as a Grand Old Man, a Resident Policeman, a Parenting Presence, a Pale Galilean; God-in-a-Box; God as Meek-and-mild, as Absolute Perfection, as a Heavenly Bosom, as a Managing Director, as a Projected Image, or as an assortment of the above? The titles may change, but the images hit pretty close to home.

In the second half of the book, Phillips offers clues to establishing a constructive, adequate image of God. The key clue is the inadequacy of the human mind to comprehend completely who our God is. Our likeness to God is only our ability to love. Our ability to picture God is solely in, through, and with Jesus. God's Son is the best image we can ever get of the invisible God who made us.

And so, back to the readings we just heard and to the task of creating an adequate image of our unseen God. The first reading from Isaiah establishes that God, for God's own sake, wipes out our offenses and remembers our sins no more. In the Gospel, we hear of a proof-miracle in which Jesus demonstrates God's love for the paralytic by forgiving his sins and healing of his paralysis as proof of the sins forgiven. The scribes summarize the

meaning and importance of this event unwittingly. They said, "Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming. Who but God alone can forgive sins?" But if Jesus can heal a paralytic as proof of forgiving sins, then he does not blaspheme. He is God's Son!

Finally, Paul to the Corinthians underscores the faithful Yes that God is for those who believe in God through Jesus Christ and who have been given the Spirit in our hearts as a first installment of God's love. Listen to the Scriptures and open your minds to the unfocused image of God that is offered. Our minds can grasp the qualities and characteristics of our God if not a focused portrait.

Our God is beyond the gender limitations of human beings. Our God has no body: no hands, ears, eyes, mouth, and nose. When we talk to God in prayer, we reference all those body parts because they are our only human references for talking. But God, our Creator's Being is beyond, above, different than our humanity.

But we do believe that God is love: ever faithful, ever concerned for us, ever forgiving of our too human, too foolish, too dense, too wooly sins. God loves us. Our task is the discipline to learn to be faithful, day in and day out,

to loving God in return for his love, to loving ourselves, and to loving all other humans as ourselves. That is the task of a disciple of Christ.

As we continue this thanksgiving service, let us praise our invisible but oh so present God and let us give God thanks by our continued struggle to construct an adequate image of God and to love as Christ has shown us.