

HOMILY SUNDAY 07 – B

“Forgiveness – Jesus’ New Thing”

(Isaiah 43:18-19, 20-22, 24-25; Psalm 41; 2 Cor 1:18-22; Mark 2:1-12)

A young boy, after being baptised, was crying on his way home in the family car. His parents could not understand as this should have been a happy occasion for them all. Finally after some gentle questioning they were able to get the reason he was crying from him when he blurted out, “The priest during the ceremony said that he wanted me to be brought up in a good Catholic Christian home, and I want to stay with you guys!”

Have you seen the movie *The Passion of the Christ*?

Forgiveness is Jesus’ new way of life.

One of the most striking scenes for me in the movie *The Passion of the Christ* is the moment when Jesus meets his mother on the way to Golgatha. He is tired, bloodied, bent under the weight of the cross and barely able to walk when his mother appears silently before him. Jesus looks at her and says simply, “Behold, I am making all things new.”

At first glance, that scene and that statement sound ludicrous. How can this person, beaten and bloodied, about to be crucified, be able to do anything except die the ignominious death on the cross that awaits him? Yet on second thought, it makes all the sense in the world. It is precisely through his acceptance of that ignominious death on the cross, that Jesus will make all things new. It is through the forgiveness on the cross of all the sins of fallen humanity that the cycle of sin, violence, evil and death will be broken.

One of the striking notes of the gospel is that when the friends of the paralytic drop him down in front of Jesus to be healed physically, Jesus ignores his paralysis and extends forgiveness to him. Why would that be?

The reason is simple. Jesus did not come into this world to be a miracle worker. He came to initiate the reign of God, which is all about entering into a new intimate relationship with God as Trinity and as forgiveness. The bottom line is that humanity stands much more in need of forgiveness than of physical healing. The miracles of physical healing that Jesus did were only to help us believe in him and repent of our sinful ways so that we could

begin to experience this new life in him.

In the first reading today, the prophet Isaiah shares with us God's promise of a *new thing*. He even asks if we can already perceive it. Isaiah goes on to say that even if the people are stuck in their old way of sin and lack of response to God's generosity, God will blot out their sin and even forget that sin.

In Matthew 5:23, Jesus teaches us the importance of receiving his forgiveness. The best way to do that is to leave our gift at the altar, if we are in church, and go to those we may have hurt, to soak up their feelings of anger towards us and then to apologize and make amends. Learning to forgive others, and apologizing to those we have hurt, becomes the foundation of a new life in Christ. Physical healing may even follow this process, as a secondary element – as it is in the gospel.

I recall a woman who did a 12 Step healing journey. At one point we met to celebrate her Step 5, which is a major life time confession. Then we reviewed the Step 6 & 7 work she had done as a way of trying to forgive those who had abused her. She did this by sharing her feelings of hurt with them with love through the letters that she wrote to them. We then celebrated the Eucharist together and put the crumpled pages of her Step 4 work, her sins, on the altar. After the Eucharist we burned them and stepped outside to scatter the ashes. As the grass was damp, she just stood on the steps and blew on the platter containing the ashes and instantly the ashes all disappeared.

That simple action struck her so powerfully that she almost fell off the steps. She realized visually that was what God was doing in her. Her sins were literally blown away and forgotten by God, along with the guilt and fear that was paralyzing her. Her resentment and anger were healed by the power of forgiveness for those who hurt her. I could almost see her stepping into the reign of God as a life time of hurt, anger, guilt, fear, sadness and resentment was lifted off her shoulders.

The Eucharist that we celebrate now is a miracle of faith, forgiveness and healing. As we receive the love of God once again through Word and Sacrament, forgiveness and healing, let us renew our commitment to enjoy this new way of life that Jesus came to give us.

So remember, forgiveness is Jesus' new way of life.