

Father Dave's Weekly Homily

02/19/12 7 B

-- In the gospel of Mark, Jesus performs quite a few miracles, more than in most of the other gospels. This is true even though it's the shortest of the gospels. There's almost a frantic pace to Jesus' work.

-- In most of these miracles, Jesus heals people. They are done as a response of compassion to a person in a sad condition. And, in most cases, he responds to a person's faith in him.

-- The miracle in our gospel can be seen as one of these many healings Jesus does. But there are a couple of unique things about this one.

-- First of all, we hear that Jesus responds to the faith of the people who were carrying this paralyzed man. Mark says *When he saw **their** faith...* not *When he saw **his** faith....* We would presume that the paralyzed man himself put faith in Jesus, but the focus is on the supporting community.

-- This is a very important detail. Jesus was responding to a group's faith. Healing is not something that simply takes place one on one. It happens in a community setting. So, too, our faith is communal.

-- We, as a Church, are called to be a healing community. Not all of us have the gift of physical healing (though there are some who do). All of us, though, can enable healing of the spirit.

-- A second unique detail is that Jesus first focuses, not on the physical condition of the man, but on his spiritual condition. He says, *My son, your sins are forgiven.*

-- Remember that, last week, I spoke of how people of that time thought of physical sickness as a punishment for sin. Jesus isn't saying that this man's paralysis is that type of punishment, but he recognizes that the man is in need of spiritual healing. (Don't all of us need that?)

-- And Jesus makes a unique claim for himself. He sees himself as a conduit for God's forgiveness. He is aware that he has God's power. He's not simply a religious teacher or even a religious healer.

-- Those Pharisees are, in a sense, right: *Who can forgive sins but God alone?* If Jesus is a mere teacher or physical healer, he is blaspheming by proclaiming forgiveness for this man. But, as we know and believe, he is much more than that. He is God's own Son.

-- Not only did Jesus heal this man in body and soul, he passed on that healing power to the people who would carry on his message. He gave the power of forgiving sin to his Church.

-- When I pronounce the words of absolution over a person who comes to me to confess their sins, I don't do so by my own power but by the power of Jesus Christ given to me through his Church.

-- That is a great gift we should not take for granted. The greatest healing the paralyzed man experienced was the forgiveness of his sins. The cure of his paralysis only confirmed that healing. It was an outward sign—we might even say a sacrament—of that spiritual healing.

-- As we prepare to begin the Lenten season in a few days, we should be attentive to our need for God's healing. This season is a good time to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation. We need that healing power.

-- And it is also a good time to find a way that we ourselves can be an instrument of God's healing for someone close to us. Our willingness to listen with sympathy, to take a little time with someone who needs us, can be of great healing power.

-- For Jesus is not just our teacher in faith. He is the one who frees us from sin and brings us true healing of mind, body and spirit.