

SUNDAY REFLECTION WITH FR. TONY
SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME YEAR B
THEME: **NEWNESS OF LIFE**

The central message of today's liturgy of the word can be found in the following words of the first reading: "... see, I am doing something new!"

In the first reading, prophet Isaiah advises the exiles in Babylon to believe that their God will forgive their sins, liberate them from the paralysis of despair and return them to their homeland in ways that will be different from those their ancestors experienced under Moses. God was preparing them for the new things they have never seen or heard before.

In the second reading, St. Paul invited the Corinthians to an experience of newness of life in their relationship with Jesus. He told them to continue to say unconditional yes to God's will, just as Jesus had done and as he himself was trying his best to do.

The Gospel reading also shares the same message through the reaction of the crowd to the newness they were finding in the preaching and healing ministry of Jesus: "They were all astounded and glorified God saying, 'We have never seen anything like this.'" Beyond showing his authority over temptation, his authority over the lives of men, over nature, over demons and over sickness, in today's Gospel, we see Jesus demonstrating a new form of authority- his authority to forgive sins. The healing episode presents Jesus as the embodiment of God, sent to save us, restore us and make us new.

The newness of what Jesus is doing, including the forgiveness of sin, the preaching and the healing, is previewed in today's passage from the book of Isaiah, in which God promises to do something new.

Today's Gospel passage actually consists of two stories. The first story is the healing narrative, in which Jesus miraculously restores a paralyzed man to health. The second is a debate between Jesus and the scribes about his power to forgive sins.

The first story demonstrates the power of faith, and in this particular case we learn what others can do for us if they are people of faith. This story is unique among all other reports of Jesus' healing ministry because the faith of the paralytic was not expressed. Rather, it was the faith of his friends who brought him to Jesus that was highlighted.

The manner in which Jesus cured the paralytic scandalized the scribes and Pharisees. By forgiving sin, they thought Jesus had blasphemed, and insulted God, because forgiving sin is the exclusive prerogative of God. These scribes and Pharisees believed that no paralytic could get up and walk unless the sins were forgiven.

Jesus insisted that if he healed the man, then his enemies must recognize his authority to forgive sins, and consequently his divinity. Jesus demonstrated that he was able to bring forgiveness to to a man's soul and physical health to his body.

My brothers and sisters in Christ, This healing of the paralytic by Jesus, demonstrates the fact that we can never be right physically until we are right spiritually, that health in body and peace with God and our brothers and sisters go hand in hand. So, if we want to share from the newness of life which God is offering us in Jesus, we need to repent from our sins, we must ask for God's forgiveness so that we can live wholesome lives. We are also expected to intercede for others and bring them to Jesus just like the friends of the paralytic who brought him to Jesus.