

7 Year B – Healing of the Paralytic

Nowadays we are more aware than we used to be that if a patient is going to recover from some illness, or keep it at bay, their own inner disposition is of paramount importance. If they have a positive attitude there is a physical benefit.

We also realise that, no matter how improved medical technology and pharmacy has become, the loving concern of another is also necessary. Someone who is well cared for will gain strength simply from that personal attention.

Human beings are body, mind and soul together. Well being requires consideration to be given to all three dimensions of our nature. And if one aspect of ourselves is neglected or in a bad way, the others will also suffer. If someone is under mental or emotional stress their bodily health will be affected. There are various so called psycho-somatic disorders.

Thus it is that guilt, regret, a sense of failure, a loss of faith in oneself or hope in humanity, can weaken us, sap our vitality, even paralyse us. We cannot bring ourselves into action, the energy has been drained away. We can become cynical, apathetic, debilitated, reclusive.

Just as loss of faith and hope can immobilise us, so can a breakdown in a loving relationship. Thus self-centredness will eat the heart out of a marriage or a friendship, even of the life of a nation.

There have been many great civilisations in the course of human history – and one of the commonest reasons for their demise has been the displacement of a spirit of mutual service by one of self-interest. Inspirational leaders become mired in corruption or cruelty and society pays the price. The rot has set in and soon spreads everywhere.

It is the understanding of all Christians, and of other great world religions, that a neglect of our relationship with God is detrimental to our health – not only our **spiritual** welfare but our whole selves including our **bodily** dimension. To sustain a good personal relationship with God, or to restore its depth if it has become superficial or peripheral in our daily life, is of the utmost importance for our overall well-being.

In today's Gospel story we hear how the physical cure of the paralytic begins, or has its source, in the remedying of his spiritual disorder. *Your sins are forgiven you*, says the Lord – and it is *then* that the man finds strength returning to his limbs.

We do not know his background, what failure there had been in his faith, hope or love – but Jesus clearly recognised that as the root cause of his physical weakness and addressed it. He reassured the man that he was held in God's love, and when the paralytic realised that truth he experienced inner joy and a renewed physical vitality.

It may be salutary for each of us to reflect on our own inner disposition and, if there is negativity there, to seek (by the light of God's grace) to discover what the cause might be.

Have we suffered some loss of faith? Have we experienced some discouragement that has weakened our hope? Has there been some surge of selfishness or self-assertion that has had repercussions upon our mood as well as on the relationships in our life? Have we neglected our relationship with God, giving little if any time to the necessary intercommunion of daily prayer?

If so the today's Psalm gives us the right words to say:

Lord, have mercy on me, heal my soul for I have sinned against you.

And words of comfort to hear:

The Lord will help him on his bed of pain, he will bring him back from sickness to health.

And just as we can ponder on these words for our **own** sake, we can apply them to others whom we bring to the Lord during this mass:

In the Gospel story the good friends of the paralytic went to great effort to carry him into the presence of the Lord, letting no obstacle discourage them. We too can put before the Lord those whom we know are in some special need at this time as we bring our gifts in the Rite of Offering and as we say in our intercessions or Biddings:

Lord in your mercy...hear our prayer.