

Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

By Fr. Bob

Once upon a time, a fabulously wealthy king had a son whom he adored. The boy was bright and handsome—perfect in every way—except one: He had a severely hunched back. This saddened the king no end. So he proclaimed that a huge reward would go to the person who figured out how to heal the boy's back. Months and months passed without a solution. Wise men and women with good ideas traveled to the palace from all over the region. But no one knew what to do.

Then one day, a famous guru happened into the kingdom and heard about the problem. "I don't want your reward," said the tine woman (who was herself all scrunched over with age and wrinkled up like a prune.) "But," she added, "I do have your answer." This was her advice: In the center of your courtyard, you must construct a sculpture—an exact replica of your dear son, with one exception: Its back must be straight and lovely in appearance. That's all. Trust God for the healing.

With that, the guru disappeared and the king's artisans set to work. In no time, a beautiful marble sculpture sat in the center of the courtyard. Every day as the little boy played, he studied the figure admiringly. He started to feel, "Why that's me! That looks exactly like me." Every day, the prince gazed lovingly at the sculpture until he identified with it.

Bit by bit, the boy's back straightened. One day, a year or so later, as the king watched his son frolicking in the gardens, he suddenly noticed the prince's back was totally healed. The young boy's identification with the marble sculpture had been so complete that he believed it represented him—straight back and all. Body obeyed belief.

Our scripture for this Seventh Sunday reminds us that our God is a God of healing and forgiveness and continual newness. In the Gospel, we continue to listen to the stories of Jesus' healing ministry and power. We have listened in past weeks to his healing of the leper, the man possessed, Simon's Mother in Law, and the many who were brought to him. But today we see a different aspect.

According to the story, the crowds were huge. And this should be no surprise. They have seen this healing action and out of curiosity alone they would come forth to see more. But the four men, the four friends we can suppose brought this paralyzed man to him and went out of their way to have him experience healing. Imagine climbing up on the roof with the immobile man stretched on the pallet—breaking a hole in the roof and somehow being able to lower him. It's a lot of work and a lot of faith. And in it all the man himself has nothing to say. He must have just marveled at the faith, the dedication, the hope of his friends. In a sense their faith was a catalyst for their friend's spiritual and physical rehabilitation by Jesus.

We might wonder what would have happened to the paralyzed man had it not been for the lived faith and loving friendship of his companions. Would he have met Jesus? Would he have been healed? Would his sins have been forgiven? Or would he have lived out the remainder of his days crippled and unaware of the tender mercies of God? These questions confront us with the responsibility we have for one another both as members of the family of humankind and as brothers and sisters in the faith.

We gather as a community of faith, and we need to gather often—whether for Eucharist or for any other reason. The fact is that we need to be saviors for one another—we need to be images for one another of God's love and beauty. An awesome responsibility!

But it is our nature as baptized people of god to be the image of God. It is our role to be healers and forgivers. Just as the paralyzed man would not have known of Jesus' love without the witness and actions of his friends—so we don't know of the love of god unless we experience it in one another.

We pray that we as a community might then be an agent of healing and wholeness, of forgiveness and love. It is our mark and sign—it is, in fact our way.

READINGS OF THE WEEK

Isaiah 43:18-25

2 Corinthians 1:18-22

Mark 2:1-12

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靈 修 生 活

耶 穌 治 癒 癱 子

林 思 川

經文脈絡： 這個主日的福音選自谷二，1-12，內容是一個治癒奇蹟(1-5、11-12)和由此而引發的一段爭辯性的對話(6-10)。馬爾谷福音第二章到第三章第6節的經文片段，幾乎都有類似的結構和內容：先是一個簡單的事件，這個事件引發了耶穌和法利賽人之間的爭論，而爭論的主題都是關於猶太傳統或法律的問題。

這個故事發生的地點仍是耶穌城市葛法翁，耶穌在加里肋亞地區巡迴宣講的某一天，又回到他在這個城市的「家」中(參閱：瑪四，13)。許多人因此而聚集在他身旁，「他就對他們講道」，講述「天主的福音」(谷一，14)。

表達信心的行動： 這是有關耶穌治好一個癱子的故事。有四個人用擔架把一位癱子抬到耶穌所在之處，但是因為人群擋住通路，他們不得不費盡苦心地拆穿屋頂、而把病人送到耶穌面前。福音作者如此刻意地詳細敘述整個過程，增加了緊張的氣氛，也更引人注意和期待接下來要發生的事情。四人努力突破阻礙、排除困難把病人帶到耶穌面前，這個行動博得了耶穌的讚賞與認可，被認為是信德的表現：耶穌看見「他們的信心」。他們相信耶穌有治癒病人的能力，這個信心表達了對於奇蹟的懇求。這些抬擔架之人的信德，是一種「為他人祈禱」的信德。

治病與罪赦的關連： 耶穌所在的行動首先只是一句「赦罪」的話：「孩子！你的罪赦了」。他如此的回應使人大感驚異：人們所期待的應該是治病的行動，但是耶穌卻只以許諾罪赦來予以回應。

就文學上看來，在耶穌說出「孩子！你的罪赦了！」這話之後，本來應該直接連到11節的經文，亦即耶穌繼續說出真正治癒性的話：「我給你說：起來，拿你的床，回家去罷！」福音作者在這二句話中間，巧妙地插入了一段有關赦罪權柄的爭論(二，6-10)。這個文學上不連貫的現象反映出，馬爾谷承繼舊約和猶太傳統思想，認為疾病和罪過之間有內在的關係，因此，耶穌應許赦罪，本身便具有「治癒疾病」的意義(比較：若九，23的經文顯示另一種思想，它對罪惡和疾病之間的直接關連提出質疑)。

真正赦罪的是天主： 「你的罪赦了」更精確的翻譯應該是「你的罪『被』赦了」，因為這裡本是一個被動語態，沒有直接說出誰是赦罪者。這是聖經中常常出現的語法，為了敬畏上主而避免直接稱呼其名，因此採用被動語態，表示真正赦罪的是天主。由於中文在習慣上比較少採用被動語態，因此這些在神學上非常重要的「神學性被動語態」常常在中文譯文中消失了。

耶穌認識人心： 由經文看來，似乎經師一直在場(雖然前面並未提及他們)觀察耶穌的言行。在馬爾谷福音的一開始(一，22)他們便被表達為和耶穌對立的角，這情況在福音中一再地重覆出現。他們並未「說出」對耶穌的批評，只是「心中忖度」耶穌說了褻瀆天主的話，因為他們認為赦罪是天主的事，「人」不得僭越這個權柄。耶穌卻識透了他們的心，針對他們在心中所做指責做出反應。在此出現了另外一個「奇蹟」，一個「知識性的奇蹟」。在舊約中只有天主認識人心，而新約中的耶穌也顯示出具有透視人心的能力，這一點暗示他擁有天主的能力。

天主子的赦罪權柄： 耶穌提出的問題：「什麼比較容易呢？」要求人思考治癒的話和赦罪的應許之間不同的重要性。外表看來這是一個關於「比較簡單」或「比較困難」的問題，一般而言人們以為空口說出赦罪的話，要比實際「治癒病人」容易；但其內在的目的，卻正好相反：耶穌經由「比較簡單」的治癒行動，證明他的確具有赦罪的權柄。治癒的行動應該成為「證據」，使人相信耶穌有赦罪的權柄，相信他是來自天主的默西亞。

但是，這段經文並未顯示有任何人最後相信了耶穌，這說明耶穌的赦罪權柄是無法因奇蹟而證明的。真正的證明在於天主承認耶穌是天主子，就如福音在敘述耶穌受洗(一，11)、在山上顯容(九，7)和他的復活時(十六，6)所表達的。這是天主給予耶穌的權能，使他在世上能夠執行赦罪的工作。這個權能給予他，因為他是和天主有獨特關係的「子」，這個關係也由經文中的「人子」頭銜表達出來(二，10)。

奇蹟的結果： 耶穌對癱子的命令「拿你的床，回家去罷！」實現了奇蹟，而在場的人都因此大為驚愕，並光榮天主。群眾的反應說明事實上是天主經過耶穌治癒癱子，並赦免了罪過。

綜合反省： 耶穌赦罪的權柄的問題，大概反應了初期教會團體具體實踐赦罪權柄(和好聖事)時所面臨的困難。如果耶穌曾因為赦罪的行為而引起經師的抗議與攻擊，那麼他的門徒們必然也面臨相同的困難。基督徒把自己的(赦罪)職權建基於耶穌的權能上，他們宣稱是耶穌的門徒，基於這個召叫，他們也得到耶穌賦予的能力，分享耶穌的權能，在教會中執行耶穌在世時曾經做過的工作。今日的教會在行使各種來自於耶穌的職權時，應當先努力使自己在各方面都是名符其實的耶穌門徒。

摘自「教友生活周刊」