Monday of the Second Week of Advent

Gospel text (*Lk* 5:17-26): One day as Jesus was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem, and the power of the Lord was with him for healing. And some men brought on a stretcher a man who was paralyzed; they were trying to bring him in and set [him] in his presence. But not finding a way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on the stretcher through the tiles into the middle in front of Jesus. When he saw their faith, he said, "As for you, your sins are forgiven."

Then the scribes and Pharisees began to ask themselves, "Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who but God alone can forgive sins?" Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them in reply, "What are you thinking in your hearts? Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the man who was paralyzed, "I say to you, rise, pick up your stretcher, and go home." He stood up immediately before them, picked up what he had been lying on, and went home, glorifying God. Then astonishment seized them all and they glorified God, and, struck with awe, they said, "We have seen incredible things today."

“As for you, your sins are forgiven.”

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Today, the Lord preaches and cures at the same time. Today we see the Lord teach those who considered themselves to be the more learned of their times: the Pharisees and the teachers of the law. We can sometimes think that because we live in the century we live in or because of the studies we have under our belt, there is little left for us to learn. This non-supernatural logic frequently leads us to think that God should fit into our way of thinking and not the other way around.

In the attitude of those who want their friend to be cured, we can see how resourceful we human beings can be when it comes to getting what we really want. What they wanted was something that was essentially good: that a sick person to be cured. But it is not enough. Our Lord wants a complete cure for us. And that's why He starts with what He has come to do in this world, with what His holy name means: to save man from his sins.

—My sins are always the deepest source of that which is bad in me “As for you, your sins are forgiven” (Lk 5:20). Very often, our prayer and our interest are purely materialistic, but the Lord knows what we really need. The doctors' surgeries are full of sick people, just like they were in the times of Jesus. And like the people of that time, we run the risk of not going, with quite the same diligence, to where we can make a full recovery: to encounter the Lord in the sacrament of Penance.

It is fundamentally important for the believer to have a sincere encounter with the mercy of Jesus. He, rich in mercy, reminds us especially today that in this Advent we cannot forget the pardon He is more than willing to give us. And that if necessary, we must rid ourselves of the impediments —the roof— that prevent us from seeing Him. —We all need to remove the tiles of our prejudices, of our comforts, of our worries, our lack of trust that is an obstacle to us setting our sights higher than the rooftops.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “The Lord is great: because of some He forgives others.” (St Ambrose)

- “And let us always go ahead, seeking the Lord, seeking new paths. And were it necessary to open a hole in the roof, may our charitable and creative imagination lead us to this: to find and create paths of encounter, paths of brotherhood, paths of peace.” (Francis)

- “Jesus hears the prayer of faith, expressed in words (the leper; Jairus; the Canaanite woman; the good thief) or in silence (the bearers of the paralytic; the woman with a hemorrhage who touches his clothes). Jesus always responds to a prayer offered in faith.” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, Nº 2616)