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 teaches and heals at the same time. Today we see the Lord teaching those who considered themselves very wise in those days: the Pharisees and the teachers of the law. Sometimes, we may think that, because of the century in which we live or the education we have received, there is little left for us to learn. This non-supernatural way of thinking often leads us to try to reshape God’s ways to fit our own, rather than the other way around.

In the attitude of those who sought healing for their friend, we see human effort directed toward a truly good goal: that the sick man might walk. But this is not enough. Our Lord wants to bring about a complete healing in us. And so, He begins with the very purpose for which He came into this world, the very

meaning of His holy name: to save man from his sins.

The deepest root of all my afflictions is always my sin: "As for you, your sins are forgiven" (Lk 5:20). Too often, our prayers or our concerns are purely material, but the Lord knows what is truly best for us. Just as in those days, doctors' offices are filled with the sick. But, like those men, we run the risk of failing to seek out, with equal diligence, the place where we can be truly and fully restored: an encounter with the Lord in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

The fundamental point in all times for the believer is the sincere encounter with the merciful Jesus Christ. He, who is rich in mercy, reminds us especially today that during this Advent season we must not neglect the forgiveness He so generously bestows. If necessary, let us remove the obstacles—the tiles—that keep us from seeing Him. I, too, need to remove the tiles of my prejudices, my comforts, my preoccupations, and my mistrust—which block “the view past the roof tiles.”

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)