

# Preaching for the Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

February 19, 2006

Readings: *Isaiah 43:18-19, 21-22, 24B-25; 2 Corinthians 1:18-22; Mark 2:1-12*

Homilist: *S. Cecilia Canales, OP*

As I sit before my computer, composing this preaching, it happens to be Valentine's Day. Perhaps this is influencing my frame of mind, but I think the readings for this Sunday leave no doubt that God wants us to believe that God is a faithful lover. No matter how we may behave, God can not be less than faithful, always reaching out to us as we live our lives, more or less conscious of the gift of God's love.

"Remember not the events of the past...See, I am doing something new...It is I, I, who wipe out, *for my own sake*, your offenses." (Isaiah) "For my own sake." That is a curious phrase. God formed us out of love and God's own Godliness demands that we be forgiven, loved, no matter what! God says we are the people formed "for myself."

Paul picks up the theme of the nature of God in his letter to the Corinthians: "God is faithful," and that is why Jesus Christ is always a "yes." "For however many are the promises of God, their Yes is in him (Jesus)." Look at the way he dealt with the paralytic and her/his friends in the gospel. It is a great scene. These four men want to bring their friend to Jesus for healing, but there is no room for them in the house, so they make a hole in the roof and lower him down! Now, hopefully the roof was made of palm branches rather than stucco! Could you imagine Jesus watching this happen? He was so impressed with *their* faith—both the paralytic and the friends—that he first forgives and then cures the person.

I am *most* impressed with the friends' persistence. Do you have friends like this? People who will do anything for you, who do not let you give up on yourself? I believe they are the love of God in our lives: faithful through thick or thin, a consistent "yes" no matter what we do to drive them away. We all *need* people like this in our lives! I guess the other side of this is, am I willing to be that kind of friend myself?

Sometimes it is children who can teach us the real meaning of being a friend. My pastor told me a story recently. He was having a bad day and was sharing this with some parishoners. Their three year old son was sitting on his lap as he spoke. The little boy had attended Children's Liturgy of the Word that morning at mass and must have really gotten the lesson because he looked up at Father and said, "Father, it's all right. My love can heal you." Father was amazed, touched *and* healed by the encounter!

Does my faith strengthen me to be a true friend for others? Many say there is a crisis of commitment in our culture, even to friendship. Too many people expect loving to be easy, or they opt out of the relationship. That is not the example we get from God, from Jesus, who gave his life for his friends. How might God be asking me to "open up the roof" so that someone I love can receive healing? Who in my life needs my time, my listening, my care? Will I be ready to respond or too busy to notice?

As we thank God for love in our lives, we must also ask for the grace, the courage, to love without counting the cost, to be faithful, to be a "Yes," to be a friend.