

The Word of God This Week

Set time aside each day this week with other members of your household, with other members of your parish or alone to listen to and reflect on the living Word of God. Use these passages from the Lectionary that are assigned for Liturgy this week. Reflect on how the Lord is inviting you to a deeper union with him.

TODAY

Isaiah 43:18–19, 21–22, 24B–25

2 Corinthians 1:18–22

Mark 2:1–12

MONDAY

Mark 9:14–29

"All things can be done for the one who believes."

TUESDAY

Mark 9:30–37

"The Son of Man is to be betrayed . . ."

WEDNESDAY

Matthew 6:1–6, 16–18

"Beware of practicing your piety before others . . ."

THURSDAY

Luke 9:22–25

"The Son of Man must undergo great suffering . . ."

FRIDAY

Matthew 9:14–15

"The wedding guests cannot mourn . . ."

SATURDAY

Luke 5:27–32

"Those who are well have no need of a physician . . ."

Failure and Faith

As we move toward the penitential season of Lent, the readings for today focus on our failings. Yet, we are consoled by the fact that something 'new' is happening in our midst.

Just as the prophet Isaiah gave hope to the Israelites, we need hope in our day. Paul reminds us that hope in God is never in vain because God will always bestow mercy upon us.

As the Gospel story of the paralytic and his four friends floats through my mind, I cannot help but think of the verse to a song that says, "He ain't heavy, he's my brother."

The crowd made it impossible for the friends to get inside the door of the home to meet Jesus face-to-face. But all five men must have heard about Jesus and already they had faith in his power to heal. With ingenuity and perseverance, they created an opening in the thatched roof to lower their paralyzed friend into the very room where Jesus stood teaching.

Jesus, admiring their faith, first pronounced that the man was forgiven of all his sins. Some of the scribes looked on with astonishment and disbelief. They accused Jesus of blasphemy, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

To prove his authority as the Son of Man, Jesus healed the man of his paralysis and instructed him to get up, take his mat, and go home.

While the crowd praised God's power in Jesus, the stage was set for the future charge of blasphemy by the religious leaders at Jesus' trial.



The Faith of the Church

When the human heart is burdened and heavy with guilt, God's desire is to give us a new heart through the grace of conversion. With the help of the Spirit, we are given the strength to seek and trust in God's merciful forgiveness so that we might have a fresh and new start in our relationship with him (Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1432).



Questions of the Week

Jesus' pronouncement of forgiveness was startling to those present. The scribes believed that only God could forgive sin. Thus, the link between Jesus and God is established early in the Gospel of Mark.

Adults

Do I truly believe that God forgives my sins and imperfections?

Children

When have I made a big mistake and asked God to forgive me?

Responding to God's Word . . .

God not only forgives our sins, misdeeds, and imperfections, he uses them for good. The tale of the Chinese water bearer illustrates the depths of Divine mercy.

The wise water bearer carried two clay pots each day to get water from the stream. One pot had a crack in it, delivering only a half full pot of water. The other pot was perfect and always delivered a full pot of water.

After two years, the cracked pot perceived itself as a failure. But the water carrier pointed out to the pot that flowers blossomed on the side of the road. He had planted seeds when

he noticed the crack in the pot, and the water that trickled out caused them to grow and flourish. "Without your being the way you are, there would not be this beauty," explained the water bearer.

We all have unique cracks and flaws that make our lives interesting, cause our growth, and ground us in God's mercy. Instead of being paralyzed by our defects, we are set free knowing that spiritual growth most often occurs through our imperfections.

God works goodness out of our imperfections when we surrender and accept that we are all cracked pots.

SUGGESTIONS

Use one of these suggestions or one of your own to respond to God's Word this week.

In the home. Create a simple "Examination of Conscience" to be used frequently during the upcoming Lenten Season.

In the workplace or in school. Look around for a friend or coworker who is struggling and offer concrete help, listening and sharing your faith.

In the community. In your parish or neighborhood, write a note to reconcile with someone who you need to forgive.



Meditation Moment

Isiah Thomas of the Detroit Pistons was picked for the NBA All Star team 10 years in a row. In an interview with *You* magazine, he talked about his faith: "My mom's faith has definitely influenced mine. . . . Whenever I'm down . . . I remember that her favorite saying is 'You make one step and the Lord will make two. He'll work the wonder for you.' It always reminds me to get up . . . and move on."

For reflection . . .

Whose faith has influenced me most in my life? When I get down on life, what helps me most "to get up . . . and move on"?

WHEN WE DO WHAT WE CAN,
GOD WILL DO WHAT WE CAN'T.

E. C. MCKENZIE

FROM *MISSION* BY MARK LINK, SJ

Your Healing Mercy

Heal me
in soul and body,
O Lord. Through your
continual act of redemption,
save me from my sins and my
misdirected words and actions.
Gather me into the fold of your
mercy that I might learn how to
forgive myself. Teach me the ways
of mercy toward others. In your
constant love, you have poured out
goodness and grace, that I might
grow into the person you desire.
Grant me the faith to truly
believe that you are always
creating something
new in my life.
Amen.

Carry this thought in your
heart as a guide for your faith
journey this week.

We know that all things
work together for good for
those who love God . . .

Romans 8:28

Profile in Faith

The Paralyzed Man

The Gospels of Mark and Matthew include this story of faith. The paralyzed man had to depend upon the graciousness of friends to transport him on a pallet to appear before Jesus. Jesus extolled the men for their faith. Freed from sin, no longer paralyzed, the man was healed in body and spirit.

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