

SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (2/21-22/2009)

Isaiah 43/18-25, Psalm 41, 2 Corinthians 1/18-22, Mark 2/1-12

The Lord announces through Isaiah: *“Remember not the events of the past; the things of long ago consider not. See, I am doing something new!”*

Something new is in the air.

The events of this past January bore witness to that newness in the political world.

Whether we take advantage of this spirit is, of course, another story yet to be written.

In today’s Gospel passage, obviously Jesus represents something new.

He brings not only healing, but also he brings forgiveness of sin.

While preaching before a standing-room-only crowd in the synagogue at Capernaum, Jesus is treated to a surprising appearance.

The ceiling over his head suddenly parts, and, down through the dusty opening, four men lower a cot with a paralytic holding on for dear life.

If it were not so serious in content, the scene would be one to tickle our funny bones.

I have no doubt that Jesus greeted the event with a broad grin.

Put yourself on that stretcher.

You are fortunate to have four friends who are willing to poke a hole in the roof for your sake.

You certainly will be the center of attraction in that solemn gathering.

So, what is it you want as you are lowered into view?

We don’t know what the paralytic was thinking because he says nothing in the scene.

But were we to hazard a guess, we’d have to say that Jesus’ reputation for healing has preceded him; obviously the paralytic wanted to walk again unencumbered.

And what does Jesus proceed to do?

He tells the young man: *“Child, your sins are forgiven.”*

Not a word about walking again!

Had Jesus set out to create controversy, he certainly chose the appropriate message.

The scribes, already sitting in judgment of Jesus, say: *“Who but God alone can forgive sins?”*

So, this new message that Jesus proposes gets a mixed reaction.

The authorities are suspicious and the worshippers are astounded into glorifying God.

For his part, Jesus knows what’s going on all around him.

He therefore takes the scene a step further as he confronts both the critics and the observers.

“Which is easier to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven’ or to say ‘Rise pick up your mat and walk?’”

Well, informed readers, which do you think is easier to say?

And this is when the “something new” we spoke of earlier confronts us totally.

Both options are easy to **say**; neither option is easy to **accomplish**, except through the power that Jesus has as Messiah and Son of God.

If he has the power for one of those alternatives, it appears he has the power for both.

“I say to you, rise, pick up your mat and go home.”

Up the delighted young man jumps and home he goes.

Back then and even now, the question is: Who really is this healing, forgiving Jesus of Nazareth?