

Friday 14 January 2022

Today is the Friday 14 January, in the first week of Ordinary Time.

The monks of the Abbey of Keur Moussa sing Psalm 146:
"It is good to sing in honour of our God - sweet is his praise.
The Lord, Restorer of Jerusalem! He brought back Israel's exiles,
healing their broken hearts, and binding up their wounds."

Today's reading is from the Gospel of Mark.

Mark 2:1-12

When he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. So many gathered around that there was no longer room for them, not even in front of the door; and he was speaking the word to them. Then some people came, bringing to him a paralysed man, carried by four of them. And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and after having dug through it, they let down the mat on which the paralytic lay. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.' Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, 'Why does this fellow speak in this way? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?' At once Jesus perceived in his spirit that they were discussing these questions among themselves; and he said to them, 'Why do you raise such questions in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, "Your sins are forgiven", or to say, "Stand up and take your mat and walk"? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins'—he said to the paralytic— 'I say to you, stand up, take your mat and go to your home.' And he stood up, and immediately took the mat and went out before all of them; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, 'We have never seen anything like this!'

This is a well-known passage from the beginning of Jesus' ministry. A lovely way of praying is to try to experience a piece of scripture through the senses, as if you were there. With so much going on, what is it that comes to your attention?

The house is full to bursting with people desperate for his attention. What are you aware of? The heat of the day, the heat of the gathering. What emotions fill the air? Wonder, or desperation? Are there rumblings of voices as people vie for attention or rapt silence as they listen to his word?

Do you hear the calls of the paralysed friends and family? Do you notice that there is more than four to plead for him, but these are the strongest, the most agile, the most determined? Can you see their intent? Feel it within you?

Feel the mood of the crowd as this band make space for their friend. Perhaps seeing Jesus as their last hope, or utterly confident in his healing power? Sense the mood change as Jesus both heals and forgives. Why the resentment? Why the judgement?

'We have never seen anything like this'. Feel your own reaction as the miracle of healing confirms the forgiveness of the paralysed man's sins. In prayer, listen to Jesus speaking to you, offering forgiveness and healing.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

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