

Prepare with Prayer

*You are my God. I worship you.
In my heart, I long for you,
as I would long for a stream
in a scorching desert.
Your love means more
than life to me,
and I praise you.*
Psalm 63:1-3

Today's Readings

Isaiah 43:22-25
Psalm 41:1-2abcd, 3 and 13
Mark 2:1-12

*God calls us to do good for others,
especially the needy.*

Scripture Background

In the Eucharistic liturgy, we honor God with offerings of bread, wine, and cash. In today's First Reading, we find references to the offerings made to God by the ancient Hebrews: sheep, grain, aromatic spices, etc.

According to Mosaic law, some of the produce brought to the temple was to be used in burnt offerings during liturgical ceremonies, while the rest was to be distributed among the priests and the poor. In this way, the people's offerings gave thanks and praise to God while also providing for the needs of the priestly and lower classes. This was yet one more reason why failure to offer sacrifices constituted a serious breach of faith.

One theme in today's multifaceted Gospel concerns the faith of the four people who help the man who cannot walk. Not only do they show belief in Jesus' power to heal but also in biblical teachings about taking responsibility for the poor and needy. The foursome certainly go the extra mile for a neighbor in need.

Jesus is teaching inside a typical, one-room home—filled wall to wall with listeners—when suddenly there are sounds heard overhead. The stretcher-bearers have used an outside stairway to reach the house's flat rooftop, which is made from wooden poles and mud plastered together in layers. In that kind of roof, a hole would be relatively easy for the four people to make and to fix later. (For a helpful illustration of a typical first-century house in Palestine, see page 1818 of *The Learning Bible*, American Bible Society: New York, 1995.)

Jesus Christ, Son of Man

The criticism Jesus receives in today's Gospel resembles allegations made during his trial in Mark 14:55-64. People accuse Jesus of equating himself with God, and Jesus responds with the fact that he is, after all, "the Son of Man."

One curiosity of all four Gospels is their infrequent use of the titles "Messiah" and "Son of God" for Jesus, yet "Son of Man" appears some 80 times. Scholars agree that this particular title is firmly rooted in Daniel 7:13, which describes a prophetic vision of "a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven."

Raymond E. Brown notes a pattern of Jesus calling himself the Son of Man whenever "faced with hostile challenges reflecting the expectations of his contemporaries" (*An Introduction to New Testament Christology*, 1994, p. 99). In using this title, he was admitting he was the Messiah while also asserting that his identity wouldn't become obvious to all until the Last Judgment.

Relationship to Children

To grasp the theme of today's Gospel, children need to picture vividly the scene in their minds, then enter into the story as imaginary participants in the action. That is why questions in the Homily focus on speculative details, such as how much time it might have taken the four men to present their friend to Jesus.

Children also are asked to think about how they might have helped the four stretcher-bearers. Too often, children slip into thinking they are too little to help out in problem situations. Nonsense. Even the youngest ones can do something positive, such as keeping silent while busy, preoccupied adults try to solve the problem.

This Week's Preparation

In the worship area, on a table covered with a green cloth, place:

- a lectionary
- a candle

For Homily, along a wall near the worship space, hang pages from a newspaper or news magazine that include photos of all different kinds of people, famous and ordinary. Be sure some of the photos show needy people: elderly, poor, disabled, etc. (Omit frightening photos of crime victims or war casualties, however.)

Make sure the pages are hung at a child's eye level. In addition, have ready for each child a red heart-shaped sticker or a cut-out paper heart with a ring of adhesive tape, sticky side out, on its reverse side; and, for later use by just one child, a blindfold and a tiny adhesive-backed heart. (The smallness of this heart will be symbolically important.)

When you ask the children about other desirable activities that the four people might have done that day, instead of helping out their friend, point out that sometimes they, too, should be willing to make sacrifices for others. It is good, for example, to be willing to leave a favorite TV show or video game when Mom or Dad needs help.

The Homily's final demonstration, based on the old children's game of "Pin the Tail on the Donkey," can be eliminated if you run short on time. But if included, it will give the children an experience to help them remember the message of today's Gospel. The blindfolded contestant is like a person crippled by his own sinfulness and selfishness. He fails even to see who the needy are, much less reach out to help them.

Children's Leaflet

Being aware of the feelings of others, especially those who suffer a disability, is this week's topic for families. The children's puzzle highlights how we all need healing.

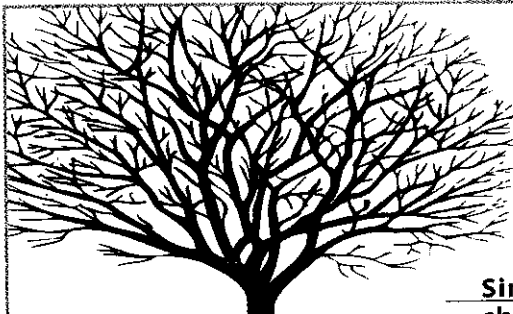
Music

See page 62 for more information.

Gathering: "Like Jesus" by Anna Vagle

Psalm: "Psalm 41: Lord, Heal My Soul" by Michael Guimont (*Gather Comprehensive*, GIA)

Gospel Acclamation: "Alleluia" by Steve Angrisano



The paralyzed man left his mat by this tree. Look! There's a message on it. Choose two colors and lightly color the mat in a checkerboard pattern. Read the words of each color and write them on the lines.

Sins are choices that cripple our ability to love. God heals us so we can love freely again.

Sins	God	are	heals	choices	us
so	that	we	cripple	can	our
ability	love	to	freely	love.	again.

Order of worship

Gathering

Give each child an adhesive-backed heart and tell the group that these hearts represent their love. Then ask the children to give their love to someone in need—symbolically—by going to the wall and pasting their heart on or near a picture of a needy person. (If the children need more direction, define *needy person* as anyone needing special care because of a physical disability, poverty, etc.)

Opening Prayer

Sing the Gathering song as the children slowly file past the wall of pictures and briefly touch each photo of a needy person. You take the lead so that they will see what to do and imitate you. Eventually lead the children back to the worship space to sit down.

Light the candle and begin the First Reading.

First Reading: Isaiah 43:22-25

Leader: We honor God every time we show love for the needy. In today's First Reading, God talks to people of ancient times who have stopped honoring him with temple sacrifices—things like meat that was always used to help the poor. You may be surprised to hear what God has to say to these people.

At the end of the reading:

Leader: The word of the Lord

Children: Thanks be to God.

Psalm: Psalm 41:1-2abcd, 3 and 13

The Psalm may be either sung or spoken. Before beginning the Psalm, sing or announce the response. (If using a sung response, see Music.)

Leader: Lord, heal my soul, for I have sinned against you.

Children: Lord, heal my soul, for I have sinned against you.

Gospel Acclamation

Invite the children to stand. Sing the suggested Acclamation or another familiar one. If you choose not to sing the Acclamation, proceed to the Proclamation of the Gospel.

Proclaim the Gospel: Mark 2:1-12

Leader: In the First Reading, we learned that when we neglect prayer and good deeds, God is always willing to give us another chance. Now let's listen to the Gospel, which is about four people who did something good for a crippled man they knew.

Leader: The Lord be with you.

Children: And with your spirit.

Leader: A reading from the Gospel of Mark.

Children: † Glory to you, O Lord.

At the end of the reading:

Leader: The Gospel of the Lord.

Children: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily

First, share with the children information from this week's Scripture Background on how houses were built in Jesus' time. Make sure they understand exactly what the four people did to help the disabled man.

Then ask these questions:

- Even for adults, do you think it was easy to carry the disabled man across town and up the stairs to the roof of the house where Jesus was? If you had been with the four people, could you have helped out in any way? (Open doors for them, make sure their path was clear, chase away barking dogs, etc.)
- How much time do you suppose it took the four people to help the man?
- What else could the four people have done that day, instead of helping their friend? (Attend Jesus' interesting talk; stay home and sleep; get extra work done; etc.)



Make these observations:

- These four people obviously had big hearts or else they would not have worked so hard to help the man.
- People with little hearts, on the other hand, are selfish and won't give up their time to help the needy. They are blind to the suffering of others.

Ask one child to represent a person with a little heart who is blind to others' suffering. Stand the child before the wall of photos, and give him or her the little adhesive-backed heart. Blindfold and spin the child around three times as for the game "Pin the Tail on the Donkey." Then direct the child to attach the small heart to a photo of a needy person. End the demonstration with these observations:

- When we live in sin and selfishness, we are like the blindfolded person with the little heart.
- If we ever *do* help anyone, it is completely by accident.
- But God wants us to help others by choice!

Profession of Faith

Leader: Please stand now for our Profession of Faith. The response to each prayer question is, "Yes, I do."

Children: Yes, I do.

Leader: Do you believe in God, our loving Creator, who made and cares for all of us, especially the needy?

Children: Yes, I do.

Leader: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, who came to earth to love and serve all of us, especially the needy?

Children: Yes, I do.

Leader: Do you believe in God, the Holy Spirit, who stays with us that we will grow in love, especially for the needy?

Children: Yes, we do.

Leader: Do you believe in the holy, Catholic Church, begun by Jesus to love and care for all, especially the needy?

Children: Yes, I do.

Prayer of the Faithful

Leader: We are the Church founded by Jesus. Right this minute, let's show our love for others, especially the needy, by praying for them with all our heart. Our response to each petition will be, "Rescue them in times of trouble."

Children: Rescue them in times of trouble.

Leader: For the Holy Father and all leaders of the Church, especially those with big problems to solve at this time, let us pray to the Lord.

Children: Rescue them in times of trouble.

Leader: For each and every member of our parish, especially those who are sick or disabled, let us pray to the Lord.

Children: Rescue them in times of trouble.

Leader: For each and every person living in our town, especially those who are in a shelter, halfway house, nursing home, or hospital, let us pray to the Lord.

Children: Rescue them in times of trouble.

Invite the children to add their own petitions.

Leader: Loving God, we know that you rescue the needy in times of trouble. Sometimes you do this with the help of angels, and sometimes you do this with our help. Never let us miss a chance to help a person in need. This we ask through Christ, our Lord.

Children: Amen.

Return to Assembly

The Liturgy of the Word ends with the Prayer of the Faithful. Prepare the children to return to the assembly in a respectful manner. Remind them to take a leaflet home and share it with their families.

**75B SEVENTH SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME**

FIRST READING

Isaiah 43:22-25 On account of me your iniquities are blotted out.

A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah

I, the LORD, said to Israel:

"You have not become tired from worshiping me.

You have not honored me by sacrificing sheep or other animals.

And I have not burdened you

with demands for sacrifices and sweet-smelling incense.

You have not bought delicious spices for me

or given me the best part of your sacrificed animals.

But you have burdened me down with your terrible sins.

Yet I wipe away your sins because of who I am.

And so, I will forget about your sins."

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalm 41:1-2abcd, 3 and 13

**R/. (5b) Lord, heal my soul,
for I have sinned against you.**

**You, LORD God, bless everyone
who cares for the poor,
and you rescue those people
in times of trouble.**

**You protect them
and keep them alive.**

**You make them happy here
in this land.**

**R/. Lord, heal my soul,
for I have sinned against you.**

When Jesus saw how much faith they had,
he said to the crippled man,
"My friend, your sins are forgiven."

Some of the teachers of the Law of Moses were sitting there.
They started wondering, "Why would he say such a thing?
He must think he is God!
Only God can forgive sins."

Right away Jesus knew what they were thinking,
and he said to them, "Why are you thinking such things?
Is it easier for me to tell this crippled man that his sins are forgiven
or to tell him to get up and pick up his mat and go on home?
I will show you that the Son of Man
has the right to forgive sins here on earth."
So Jesus said to the man, "Get up!
Pick up your mat and go on home."

The man got right up.
He picked up his mat and went out while everyone watched in
amazement.
They praised God and said,
"We have never seen anything like this!"

The gospel of the Lord.

**You always heal them
and restore their strength
when they are sick.
You, the LORD God of Israel,
will be praised forever!
Amen and amen.**

**R/. Lord, heal my soul,
for I have sinned against you.**

ALLELUIA

Luke 4:18

R/. Alleluia, alleluia.

**The Lord sent me to bring good news to the poor
and freedom to prisoners.**

R/. Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

Mark 2:1-12 The Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.

† A reading from the holy gospel according to Mark

**Jesus went to Capernaum,
and a few days later people heard that he was at home.
Then so many of them came to the house
that there was not even standing room
left in front of the door.**

**Jesus was still teaching when four people came up,
carrying a crippled man on a mat.**

But because of the crowd,

they could not get him to Jesus.

**So they made a hole in the roof above him
and let the man down in front of everyone.**