



February 19, 2012
Seventh Sunday of Ordinary Time

*"We have never seen anything like this."
—Mark 2:12*

Dear Friends;

Last week my story about Reynaldo sparked some reflection. At our ministry appreciation one of our volunteers, Chris Delgado, told me the story of a man who worked for a geothermal company and had been horribly disfigured by an accident. No one wanted to look at him directly but would stare at the man when they thought he was not looking. The man had become very shy and reticent because most were afraid to talk to him.

Often the sick or terminally ill don't get visits from people with whom they had been close. Perhaps some people do not know what to do or say in the presence of sickness and death. They are uncomfortable with the unpleasant reminder of our own mortality. So those who do come and visit the sick are not only really good friends but also show courage to face the brokenness of life.

In Jesus' time it was no different. People blamed illness on demons and so the sick were feared and avoided. Illness not only afflicted the body but also one's spirit and one's relationships. This is because illness was seen as punishment for sin. So people with affliction were also ostracized from the community.

John Shea interprets this story of the paralytic's healing from the perspective of folk tales. He sees the house as an image of the Church. It is gathered around Jesus but has become a barrier. The crowd around Jesus has prevented the man from coming near to Jesus. They cannot believe that something new is possible. Our attitudes and actions can inhibit others from getting to Jesus.

It took the perseverance of the paralytic's friends to get him near the one who could heal. They do this despite the rest of the community. So these friends make a hole in the roof and drop the paralyzed one down in front of Jesus. This symbolizes divine intervention working through others.

Jesus' intention is not solely to cure but to heal. Curing restores the body but healing restores the man to right relationship with the community. Thus Jesus forgives the man his sins. The scribes react, they would rather see the man stay as he is rather than to admit that forgiveness is possible for all. In this they are the ones who are truly paralyzed.

Two things can paralyze us in this life—fear and the inability to forgive. Both can keep us isolated from others and imprisoned in our insecurity. Jesus calls us to stand up and not be afraid. He calls us to believe that we are forgiven and in turn can forgive others. But we cannot come to that point on our own.

This is the other point of this story. When we are paralyzed by our own fear or the grudges we hold it may take a group of friends to carry us before the Lord. We sometimes need people to help carry us through those moments of personal paralysis. We need those who love us as we are and forgive us all our foibles. We need each other in the community of faith.

There is a country song I hear on the radio that tells the story of a young woman diagnosed with cancer. And she is not sure she is going to be able to get through it. Then her husband tells her in the refrain of the song not to worry "I'm going to love you right through it." That is what Jesus does and that is the power he shares with us the power to heal through love and forgiveness.

Peace,

Fr Ron