

7<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the Year B February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2012 – Fr. Gerald Haemmerle

This past Monday evening we had a presentation by a theology professor from U.D. on what led up to Vatican 11, the importance of Vatican 11, and what followed. After his presentation it was opened to questions and comments. The first two who spoke expressed some concern that we as a church were moving back to the time before the Council, and all the things we emphasized then. Interestingly then some spoke in support of that movement, and they summarized their comments by saying that “we never hear about sin anymore.”

I am always a little disturbed when I hear comments like that. Perhaps it was because we used to hear so much about sin. Since the Council we do stress the love and forgiveness of God much more. But I am sure there is some truth to that statement, and that sin is part of our world and our lives, and we need to face it.

In our gospel today Jesus speaks about sin. The paralyzed man is brought to the Lord, and Jesus, seeing the faith of the four men who brought him, said to the man “Child, your sins are forgiven.” He then goes on to heal the man physically, telling him to “rise, pick up your mat, and go home.”

This coming Wednesday is Ash Wednesday. We will come forward and receive ashes on our forehead. The one giving the ashes can say, “Remember man that you are dust, and unto dust you shall return.” We are reminded of our mortality, that we will some day die. Or the preferred option, “Turn from your sins and believe in the gospel.” Lent is about change, it is about conversion. Ashes are a sign of our sinfulness, by receiving them we admit that we are a sinner in need of healing.

What are the sins that paralyze us? Perhaps they are an addiction to something, like drinking or eating or greed or laziness. Perhaps it is an unwillingness to forgive or to accept forgiveness? The season of Lent is a very special time for us to come before the Lord and to seek healing and forgiveness. I encourage all of you to come this Ash Wednesday to receive the ashes and begin the journey of this holy season.

In this story I am always struck by the four friends who bring the paralyzed man to Jesus. It was because of their faith that they are persistent in getting the man to Jesus, opening the roof and lowering the man before Jesus. Then they turn it over to Jesus, who does the forgiving and healing. I am reminded of people in the RCIA process. I often ask them why they choose to enter the Catholic Church, and almost always it is because of the example of a friend, someone whose faith is so real that it gives them a strength and peace that they do not have.

Today five sets of parents have brought their children to this church to have them baptized. They bring their children to the Lord and turn them over to Him to wipe away original sin and fill them with the Spirit of God, the life of God. They bring their children here today to make them a part of this Christian community. But unlike the four friends in the gospel story, their job is not over. It is your responsibility to nourish that faith in the child. You do this by your actions, you do it by your example. If the faith is important to you, it will be to your child.

During the season of Lent we move from ashes to the baptismal waters of Easter. During this season may we recommit ourselves to our baptismal promises. May we place ourselves at the foot of the Lord.