

“Jesus said to the paralytic, ‘Child, your sins are forgiven.’”. These are the first words that Jesus speaks to the paralyzed man after seeing him lowered through the roof. And this is very important. For it would have been pretty obvious to everyone, including Jesus, that this man lying on the mat was paralyzed. And it also could’ve been assumed that he was hoping Jesus could and would heal him of that paralysis. But the first words of Jesus aren’t, “You are healed of your physical ailment,” but rather, “Your sins are forgiven.”

Jesus would also cure the man of his paralysis, but He doesn’t start there. Jesus knows which healing is more important. For our spiritual health is far more important than our physical health. This isn’t to say that our physical health doesn’t matter, or that we shouldn’t try to take care of our bodies. But it does mean that we should be more concerned, and more dedicated, to caring for our souls.

In our current society, we hear a lot about how to care for our bodies, especially how to prevent, treat and cure various diseases. This goes for issues in mental health as well. And whenever we have something wrong health-wise, we want to know what the cause is, so that we can better treat it, cure it, and also, prevent it in the future. Many times, we’re willing to make changes in our lives with the hopes of making ourselves healthier. Whether it’s taking various medicines, eating certain foods, or performing specific exercises, we’re willing to at least do something for the sake of good health.

Unfortunately, though, we don’t seem to have the same attitude when it comes to our spiritual well-being. This is unfortunate, for as I said, the spiritual is more important than the physical. It seems that part of the reason for this, at least to a certain extent, is we don’t know where to start when it comes to taking care of our souls. I suggest that we start with the very thing that Jesus points us to in today’s Gospel.

When Jesus gave the paralytic the spiritual healing that he needed, He did so by saying, “Child, your sins are forgiven.” Jesus is reminding us that it is our sins that are the cause of our spiritual sickness. So, if we want to know how to prevent, treat and cure our spiritual maladies, we need to understand sin, in the world, and especially in our lives.

And we can learn a lot about sin just by looking at the word itself. It’s a small word, consisting of only three letters. But if we look at it carefully, we see those three letters, S, I and N, and we realize that at the center of the word sin, is “I”. This seems very appropriate. For at the center of every sin we commit, is “I”. Me, my own selfishness, my own wants, my own opinions. At the center of every sin is this thought that it’s all about me.

Sin is putting ourselves ahead of God. Putting our will above His Will. Putting our desires above His desires for us. Putting our opinions above His teachings and commands. Putting our personal comfort above our relationship with God. This is what sin is; more than just violating a rule, it is trying to put ourselves in a position where only God should be. And we know this happens in big ways, and in seemingly small ways. But whether it’s big or small, we know sin is opposed to God and thus, pushes us away from God.

So, what can be done about this? How do we handle this? Well, one solution that clearly doesn’t work is to try to ignore sin, to pretend it doesn’t exist or it’s not that big a deal. But to pretend sin doesn’t exist does nothing about sin. It’s the same as trying to pretend cancer doesn’t exist, or pneumonia doesn’t exist, or heart disease doesn’t exist. Pretending these things don’t exist, or ignoring them, or assuming they’re not serious, doesn’t mean that they just disappear. We know they remain, and we know that these things can cause a lot of pain and a lot of damage for those who suffer from them, and for their family and friends.

It’s the same with sin. Sin is real; it exists. And no matter how much we’d like to think it doesn’t matter or isn’t important, sin remains, and causes a lot of pain and a lot of damage to all of us. It can weaken, or completely sever, our relationship with God. This, in turn, will only have a negative effect on our relationship with others. So, we must be aware of sin and take it seriously.

And then, we can properly treat it. The easiest way to do this, and the usual way according to God’s plan, is through the Sacrament of Reconciliation – through making a good, sincere Confession to a priest, and receiving absolution through his actions. And we should do this on a regular basis, for a good Confession is not only treating our sins, but also preventing future sins. Now, I know this isn’t always easy to do; it makes us uncomfortable, possibly embarrassed. We feel shame for what we’ve done wrong, especially if it’s been quite a while since we’ve received this Sacrament.

But we know that the paralytic in the Gospel had to go through a lot to come to Jesus and be healed. And I’m sure if we were able to ask him about it today, he’d say it was all worth it. For just as we’re willing to do necessary things for our physical health, we should be willing to do what is necessary for our spiritual health. As Jesus says so many times throughout the Scriptures, “Be not afraid.” He is waiting for us to come to Him in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. He waits in the person of the priest, who is the instrument of God. And as the priest witnesses your faith, he will say to you, “Child, your sins are forgiven,” and you will be healed.