7th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C

Isaiah 43:18-19, 21-22, 24b-25

This selection is part of the "Book of Consolation" where we can see the exodus from Egypt as the prototype of every instance of liberation brought about by the Lord. The most direct reference in this selection is to the return of those exiled in Babylon although it also points to other future events. The original exodus from Egypt was quite remarkable and well worth pondering but this exodus is truly "new", surpassing what happened in former times.

Thus says the Lord:
18. Remember not the events of the past, the things of long ago consider not; This is God speaking! Here he warns against glorying in the past to the extent that there is no time for application in the present.
19. see, I am doing something new! The Catechism tells us that this developed into two lines of prophecy: the expectation of the Messiah which was clarified and expounded on over the centuries, and the announcement of a new Spirit. Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? In the desert I make a way, in the wasteland, rivers. This verse seems to say, "Must you be so blind!" Here God is talking about the coming exodus out of Babylon when he will bring his people back to their homeland. However, his words also apply to the promised victory of all Israel being re-gathered when Christ comes to rule in peace over the earth.
21. The people I formed for myself, that they might announce my praise. With missionary zeal Israel will praise Yahweh before the world. Her task is to be a witness to tell the whole world who God is and what he has done.
22. Yet you did not call upon me, O Jacob, for you grew weary of me, O Israel. God accuses the people of a lack of human gratitude. Here begins a list of sins or crimes that the people committed against God: they did not call upon Him, they grew weary of Him, and they did not honor Him with sacrifices.
24b. You burdened me with your sins, and wearied me with your crimes. Israel is wearying God with her complaints, literally making a servant of God.
25. It is I, I, who wipe out, for my own sake, your offenses; your sins I remember no more. Here God asserts his forgiveness. Unlike most of the other prophets who list the sins of the people and then threaten them, Deutero-Isaiah presents the mercy of God.

2 Corinthians 1:18-22

In this brief passage Paul is dealing with a specific situation in which he was accused of going back on his word. His original plan had been to visit the Corinthians on his way "to" and "from" the province of Macedonia. Because tensions were high after a painful, emergency visit, he changed his itinerary and chose not to visit them again AFTER being in Macedonia. He apparently traveled straight back to Asia Minor instead of making his intended return to Corinth. He denies that his original plan failed for any but apostolic reasons. His enemies went on to argue "If we cannot trust Paul's everyday promises, if we cannot depend on him to do what he said he would do, how can we trust the things he told us about God?" Paul in fact was not fluctuating between Yes and No as though he were unpredictable or double-minded, but he was making all decisions in the best interests of the Corinthians. In this case, he wished to avoid another confrontational visit and so withdrew until tensions were eased.

Brothers and sisters:
18. As God is faithful, our word to you is not "yes" and "no."
19. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was proclaimed to you by us, Silvanus and Timothy and me, These three were the original founders of the Corinthian Church. SILVANUS is also known as "Silas." He was a leading member of the Church of Jerusalem and a prophet who accompanied Paul and Barnabas to Antioch to communicate the liberties granted the Gentile Christians by the Council of Jerusalem. Paul then chose Silas, a Roman citizen, to accompany him on his second journey. This made him one of the first Christian missionaries to reach the continent of Europe. He shared Paul's imprisonment and release at Philippi and was involved with Paul in the riot at Thessalonica. He also helped preach the Gospel at Corinth. He then began to work with Peter and by the year 64 A.D. he was in Rome writing a letter for Peter to a group of Churches in northern Asia Minor. This letter is 1 Peter and Silas is also the man who delivered the letter. TIMOTHY was a disciple and companion of Paul. He was a native of Lystra, the son of a Greek father and a Jewish Christian mother. He was one of Paul's most intimate and trusted associates and accompanied him on the second journey and helped with the evangelization of Corinth. He is associated with Paul in the salutations of 7 letters. When John received his vision recorded in Revelations, he sent letters of warning to seven of the churches of Asia Minor about their evident decline in the original fervor of their faith. Timothy was still Bishop of Ephesus and taking St. John's letter very much to heart, he challenged the licentious public rituals for the goddess Diana and was martyred for it in the year 97 A.D. was not "yes" and "no," but "yes" has been in him.
20. For however many are the promises of God, their Yes is in him; therefore, the Amen from us also goes through him to God for glory. This is saying that all the promises of God the Father find their guarantee in Jesus and it is through Jesus that we say "Amen" to those promises. "Amen" means "So let it be" and because Jesus is the unbreakable yes of God, we can have confidence that our prayers will be heard and that all the great promises are true. Here the "Amen" expresses not just the acceptance of God's promises, but the fervent desire of the people for God's promises to be fulfilled and to trust wholeheartedly that they will be. From the very beginning of Christianity, the "Amen" was said at the end of the Church's public prayers.
21. But the one who gives us security with you in Christ and who anointed us is God; Just as Jesus the Messiah was anointed with the Spirit, (Acts 10:38), so Christians share in the anointing of the same Spirit through the Sacraments.(1 John 2:20, 27) Commenting on this passage, St. John Chrysostom explains that by this anointing the Holy Spirit establishes the Christian as prophet, priest and king for in olden times these three types of people were anointed to confirm them in their offices. We Christians have all three offices for we shall inherit a kingdom which makes us kings, we are priests if we offer our bodies as a sacrifice (we offer our prayers, works, joys and sufferings), and we are prophets for secrets have been revealed to us which eye has not seen nor ear heard.
22. he has also put his seal upon us This seal is an inward stamp of divine ownership. Seals in the ancient world were often impressed in clay or wax by a king, queen, or royal official as a sign of authority, identifying the owner of property or the sender of a letter. Paul's teaching points to the indelible "character" imprinted on souls who receive Baptism and Confirmation. This spiritual mark entitles them to God's grace and protection, while its permanent effect makes it impossible to receive these Sacraments of Initiation more than

once. and given the Spirit in our hearts These are the promises of the Blessed Trinity: It is the Father who has anointed us, establishing us in the Son, through the gift of the Holy Spirit. as a first installment. The word used here is a commercial term for a "pledge" given in advance of full payment. On earth, believers share in the "first fruits" of the Spirit as they await the full inheritance of divine life and blessing in heaven.

Mark 2:1-12

In our reading today we find several indicators of Jesus' divine nature: He forgives sins, He can read the human heart, and He has the power to heal physical illness instantly.

1. When Jesus returned to Capernaum after some days, (He had been preaching in Galilee.) it became known that he was at home. Jesus is back "at home" in Capernaum at Peter's house, we assume.
2. Many gathered together so that there was no longer room for them, not even around the door,
3. and he preached the word to them. The "word" is used in Mark to mean The Gospel. They came bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men.
4. Unable to get near Jesus because of the crowd, they opened up the roof above him. After they had broken through, they let down the mat on which the paralytic was lying. In this man's physical paralysis, St. Thomas sees a type of spiritual paralysis: the cripple was unable to return to God by his own efforts.
5. When Jesus saw their faith, Here he refers to the faith of the four men who carried the paralytic. he said to the paralytic, "Child, your sins are forgiven." Putting pardon of sin before bodily cure would seem very natural to Jewish onlookers, for it was a Jewish belief that practically every bodily infirmity was caused indirectly or directly by sin. From this belief would follow the view that forgiveness of sin must precede the cure of bodily infirmity. However, they thought that God alone had the power to forgive sins. We can also consider that the forgiveness that Jesus confers upon the helpless paralytic in response to the faith of others (the four men) mirrors the effects of infant Baptism, where he continues to regenerate helpless children through the intercessory faith of their parents.
6. Now some of the scribes These men were scholars of the Mosaic Law and its traditional interpretation. With the exception of one episode (12:28-34) they are cast as Jesus' adversaries in Mark. were sitting there asking themselves,
7. "Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming. The scribes are incensed that Jesus claims for himself a prerogative that belongs only to God: the power to remit sins. They have misjudged the matter as blasphemy, which was a capital crime in ancient Israel. Note that Jesus manifests his divinity by absolving the man's sins, by reading the human heart and by instantly curing his physical illness. Who but God alone can forgive sins?"
8. Jesus immediately knew in his mind what they were thinking to themselves, so he said, "Why are you thinking such things in your hearts? No thought of man is unknown to God. Our sins first take place in the mind and then in our actions. Note that Jesus says: "Why are you THINKING such things in your HEARTS?" for the Bible uses "heart" where in English we would use "mind" or "will." The writers of

scripture considered the heart as the seat of intelligence and decision and as the chief bodily focus of emotional activity. The heart expresses the whole interior life of man in Jewish thought.

9. Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, pick up your mat and walk?' Forgiveness is easier to claim than to accomplish since its effects cannot be verified by observation. For this reason, Jesus restores the man's body as a visible demonstration of what he has already done invisibly in his soul. After his Resurrection, Jesus invests other men (the apostles and their successors) with this same power to forgive sins in his name.
10. But that you may know that the Son of Man This is a messianic title that occurs 70 times in the Synoptics and 12 times in John. It comes from Daniel to designate one like a man who appears on the clouds before the ancient of Days and receives a kingdom. has authority to forgive sins on earth"—he said to the paralytic,
11. "I say to you, rise, pick up your mat, and go home." Note that Jesus did not touch the man. The cure was effected by his word.
12. He rose, picked up his mat at once, and went away in the sight of everyone. They were all astounded and glorified God, saying,
13. "We have never seen anything like this." Over and over in his preaching our Lord appealed to the evidence of his works to substantiate the truth of his teaching.

Some of the material for this commentary was taken from: (1) "The Jerome Biblical Commentary," (2) "The Book Of Isaiah Chapters 40-66" by Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P., (3) "The Bread of Life Catholic Bible Study" by Deacon Ken & Marie Finn, (4) "The Navarre Bible: Major Prophets," (5) "Catechism Of The Catholic Church," (6) "Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The First and Second Letters of Saint Paul to the Corinthians" With Introduction, Commentary, and Notes by Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch, (7) "Dictionary Of The Bible" by John L. McKenzie, S.J., (8) "Who's Who In The New Testament" by Ronald Brownrigg, (9) "The Navarre Bible: Corinthians," (10) "The Letters To The Corinthians" by William Barclay, (11) "Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Gospel Of Mark" With Introduction, commentary, and Notes by Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch, (12) "Mark: Good News For Hard Times" by George T. Montague, S.M., (13) The St. Paul Center For Biblical Theology Online founded by Dr. Scott Hahn, and (14) "The Sunday epistles And Gospels" by Monsignor Patrick Boylan.

In loving memory of Peg Schneller, who compiled these commentaries.