

Sin is the word for this Sunday. The **sin** is remaining static in a dynamic situation, not listening to the arguments of reason. A scholar writes of the Gospel of Mark “that Jesus was forever under siege and was always challenged.”¹ The reason is that people were already set in their ways and were unwilling to think things afresh.

My notion of a dichotomy between a dynamic and static approach to love originates from Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P.² who is often quoted and cited in these notes. Such dichotomy becomes cosmologically important as I watch astronomers on television admit that as fact piles upon fact; they continually become more and more confused because they live on this little planet in a small area of the universe. My thought is that if astronomers cannot see the whole picture of the material universe and are continually confused by the facts, how much more the Faithful should be faithfully open to what the scholars offer that might upset their preconceived notions about the spiritual life. The whole Gospel of Mark is about the need for just such openness to bring about the Coming of the Kingdom.

Pope John Paul II refers to Mk 2:3-13 in paragraph 21 of his *Apostolic letter on the Most Holy Rosary*. The Pope writes, “Another mystery of light is the **preaching** by which Jesus proclaims the coming of the Kingdom of God, calls to conversion (cf. Mk 1:15) and forgives the sins of all who draw near to him in humble trust (cf. Mk. 2:3-13; Lk 7:47-48) ...”

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

verse 19³ see, I am doing something new

¹ Jerome H. Neyrey, S.J., “Questions, *Chreiai*, and Challenges to Honor: The Interface of Rhetoric and Culture in Mark’s Gospel,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 60, No. 4 (October 1998) 680.

² Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P., The Spirituality of the Psalms (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2002) ISBN 0-8146-2599 page 157.

³ Indented verses are taken from the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, The Roman Missal Restored by Decree of the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican and Promulgated by Authority of Pope Paul VI: Lectionary for Mass: For Use in the Dioceses of the United States of America: Second Typical Edition: Volume I: Sundays, Solemnities, Feasts of the Lord and Saints (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1998).

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This is Second Isaiah, having returned to Jerusalem. The theme of the exile first leaves Egypt, but then Babylon. This new exodus from Babylon is the something new.⁴ Jesus, himself, is really new.

verse 21 The people I formed for myself,
 that they might announce my praise.

At this point, God has reconstituted his people for his own praise. The journey through the deserts has ended.⁵

verse 22 Yet you did not call upon me, O Jacob,
 for you grew weary of me, O Israel.

verse 24b You burdened me with your **sins**,
 and wearied me with your crimes.

verse 25 It is I, I, who wipe out,
 for my own sake, your offenses;
 your **sins** I remember no more.

Narcissistic static is one way to grow weary of God. While a mind that is always open is like a sieve, it will not hold anything, a mind that is never open is like the adversaries of Jesus that Mark portrays throughout his Gospel.

Saint Jerome points to verse 25 as indicative of the fact that it is God, God who forgives **sins**.⁶

Psalm 41:2-3, 4-5, 13-14

verse 2 **Blessed** is the one who has regard for the lowly and the poor.

⁴ Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P., The Spirituality of the Psalms (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2002) ISBN 0-8146-2599, pages 93, 194.

⁵ Richard J. Clifford, S.J., "The Unity of the Book of Isaiah and Its Cosmogonic Language," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 55, No. 1 (January 1993) 4.

⁶ Jerome in *Exposition from the Catena Aurea*, The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: A Manual of Preaching, Spiritual Reading and Meditation: Volume Four: From the Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost to the Twenty-fourth and Last Sunday after Pentecost, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal, D.D. (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 180.

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The original meaning for **blessed** carries the notions of happy and fortunate to the point that Stuhlmüller writes, “the word might even be translated: ‘How envious’ or ‘to be envied’ is that person.”⁷

verse 3 The LORD will keep and preserve him,
 and make him **blessed** on earth,
 and not give him over to the will of his enemies.

Stuhlmüller observes that “all of Psalm 41 turns into a thanksgiving prayer after illness.”⁸ There is an adversarial relationship implicit between the psalmist and his God in this third verse.

The antiphon:

verse 5b Lord, heal my soul, for I have **sinned** against ;you.

The Psalm:

verse 5b Heal me, though I have **sinned** against you.”

verse 4 The LORD will help him on his **sickbed**.

I am not arguing about the **sickbed** translation, but do want to note that the Latin is *lectum doloris*,⁹ that I might translate *bed of sorrow*. In other words, I can see the **sickbed** as a **sickbed** of the soul as well as of the body. Verse 5 about healing the soul strengthens my sense of spiritual as well as material sickness.

verse 14 **Amen. Amen.**

Here, Saint Jerome¹⁰ uses *fiat*, “Thy will be done.” Later, in 2 Corinthians, Jerome uses **Amen**.

⁷ Carroll Stuhlmüller, C.P., The Spirituality of the Psalms (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2002) ISBN 0-8146-2599 181.

⁸ Carroll Stuhlmüller, C.P., The Spirituality of the Psalms (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2002) ISBN 0-8146-2599 137-138.

⁹ Nova Vulgata: Bibliorum Sacrorum Editio: Sacrosancti Oecumenici Concilii Vaticani II ratione habita Iussu Pauli PP, VI Recognita Auctoritate Joannis Pauli PP, II Promulgata Editio Typica Altera (00120 Citta Del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1979, 1986, 1998) ISBN 88-2209-2163-4

¹⁰ Saint Jerome, the Latin, the Vulgate, and the Nova Vulgata all refer to Nova Vulgata: Bibliorum Sacrorum Editio: Sacrosancti Oecumenici Concilii Vaticani II ratione habita

2 Corinthians 1:18-22

verse 20b therefore, the **Amen** from us also goes through him to God for glory.

Luke 4:18

No comment

Mark 2:1-12

verse 1 When Jesus returned to Capernaum after some days, it became known that he was at **home**.

Home is important to Mark.¹¹ Pope Saint Gregory the Great (540-604) regards **house** as “also used to mean the dwelling-place of the heart.”¹²

verse 2c and he **preached** the word to them.

At this point in the story, only Jesus is doing any **preaching**, but later the Twelve are promised a share in the mission.¹³

verse 3 They came bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men.

verse 5 When Jesus saw **their** faith, he said to the paralytic, “Child, your **sins** are forgiven.”

Iussu Pauli PP, VI Recognita Auctoritate Joannis Pauli PP, II Promulgata Editio Typica Altera (00120 Citta Del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1979, 1986, 1998) ISBN 88-2209-2163-4

¹¹ Robert H. Gundry, “Mark 10:29: Order in the List,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 59, No. 3 (July 1997) 465-475.

¹² Saint Gregory the Great, Pope and Doctor, PL 76, Book XXIII of *Morals in Job*, xxxiii, 16-20, col. 275 as cited in The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: A Manual of Preaching, Spiritual Reading and Meditation: Volume Four: From the Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost to the Twenty-fourth and Last Sunday after Pentecost, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal, D.D. (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 192.

¹³ Francis J. Moloney, S.D.B., “Mark 6:6b-30: Mission, the Baptist, and Failure,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 63, No. 4 (October 2001) 651.

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Saint John Chrysostom (354-407), Patriarch of Constantinople and Saint Peter Chrysologos (+450), Bishop of Ravenna, both Doctors of the Church, point out that it is not the faith of the paralytic, but the faith of those who brought him that inspired Jesus to heal the paralytic. The paralytic himself may not have wanted to be rid of his sins, but simply to be returned to good health. No matter. Jesus cured him of his sins and only cured him of his paralysis later, as a sign of his earlier cure.¹⁴

verse 6 Now some of the scribes were sitting there asking themselves

The Greek and the Latin do not carry the idea of talking among themselves, but rather thinking to themselves. Jesus could see their thoughts. The thought itself was reasonable enough.

verse 7 Who but God alone can forgive **sins**?

Turning the table, commenting on this verse, Saint Ambrose (339-397), Bishop of Milan, writes, "For everyone who is ill should seek helpers in prayer, to pray for his restoration to health ..."¹⁵

verse 9 Which is easier, to say to the paralytic,
 `Your **sins** are forgiven,'
 or to say, `Rise, pick up your mat and walk'?

verse 10 But that you may know
 that the Son of Man has authority to forgive **sins** on earth"
 —he said to the paralytic,

verse 11 "I say to you, rise, pick up your mat, and go **home**."

Saint Ambrose regards this passage as indicative of the coming resurrection of the dead.¹⁶

¹⁴ Chrysologos in Exposition from the Catena Aurea and PL 52, col. 339. Sermo L. as cited in The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: A Manual of Preaching, Spiritual Reading and Meditation: Volume Four: From the Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost to the Twenty-fourth and Last Sunday after Pentecost, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal, D.D. (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 179-180, 190.

¹⁵ Ambrose in Exposition from the Catena Aurea and PL 15, col 1638, Expos. Evang. sec. Lucam., V, 10-15 as cited in The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: A Manual of Preaching, Spiritual Reading and Meditation: Volume Four: From the Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost to the Twenty-fourth and Last Sunday after Pentecost, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal, D.D. (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 181-182.

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One scholar views Mark as an exposition of questions and challenges to the honor of Jesus. These are not friendly, information-seeking queries, but attempts to dishonor the Lord. Such was the standard operating procedure at the time of Jesus for anyone who desired to be considered wise. The idea was that there was only so much wisdom to go around and that gain in reputation for one person involved a lessening in reputation for another person. Thus, the questions. The scholar points out that in Mark, “those who ask Jesus questions all turn out to be his adversaries who constantly criticize him, plot his harm, test him, seek to entrap him, and the like”¹⁷ The critical and hostile questions are challenges to the identity and honor of Jesus. If Jesus received a difficult time, the Faithful should expect no less.

In conclusion, the Psalm brings inner peace, joy, and to-be-envied contentment resulting from the forgiveness of **sins**. Second Isaiah is about a similar joy at having gotten past **sin** to praise God with greater alacrity. 2 Corinthians is about God only wanting positive things for the Faithful. The paralytic is about the **sin** of not reading the signs of the times, of being too caught in status to realize the wonder of dynamic getting past **sin** and into love and praise.

¹⁶ Ambrose, PL 15, col 1638, *Expos. Evang. sec. Lucam., V, 10-15* as cited in The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers: A Manual of Preaching, Spiritual Reading and Meditation: Volume Four: From the Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost to the Twenty-fourth and Last Sunday after Pentecost, tr. and ed. M. F. Toal, D.D. (P.O. Box 612, Swedesboro, NJ 08085: Preservation Press, 1996) 183.

¹⁷ Jerome H. Neyrey, S.J., “Questions, *Chreiai*, and Challenges to Honor: The Interface of Rhetoric and Culture in Mark’s Gospel,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 60, No. 4 (October 1998) 672.