

7th Sunday Year B

THE LORD FORGIVES

Allan Moss OMI

www.sjti.ac.za/resources_homily.htm

First Reading: Isaiah 43:18-19. 21-22.24-25
Response: **“Heal my soul for I have sinned against you”** (Ps.40:5)
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 40:2-5.13-14
Second Reading: 2 Corinthians 1:18-22
Gospel: Mark 2:1-12.

Behold the Lamb, the Risen Lord, ‘Adon Ne’or, in our midst, who takes away our sins. He forgives the past and gives a future. He is the gift of the Father who strengthens our faith in the one true God, God of God, and light of life.

**“Firm is our faith in one true God,
Loving Father and King supreme,
Mighty Creator, Lord of all,
Visible world and world unseen.”**

(Moira Kearney & Archbishop Denis E.Hurley OMI. *The People’s Hymn Book*. 124)

Almighty God tells Isaiah to quit looking back, **“no need to recall the past”** (Is.43:18). We learn from Isaiah to open ourselves completely to God, **“See, I am doing a new deed”** (Is.43:19).

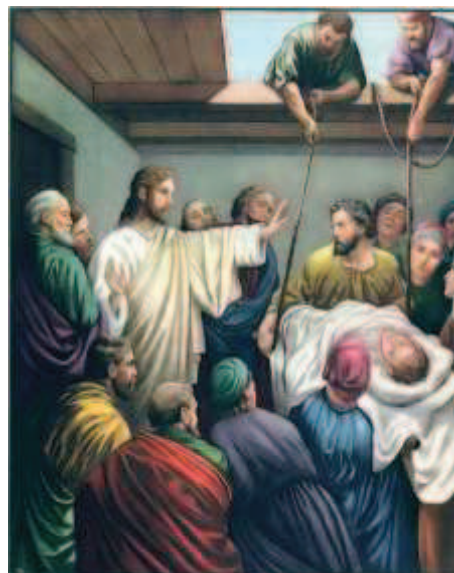
What new thing has the Lord done in your life? What is he doing now? God tells his prophet **“I will blot out everything and not remember your sins”** (Is.43:18).

This answers the human cry of shame and brokenness, **“heal my soul for I have sinned against you”** (Ps. 40:5). The Lord hears the cry from the heart and **“will save him in the day of evil”** (Ps.40:2).

Such tremendous love is manifested in *Jeshua’ haMashiah*, Jesus Christ, in his words to the paralytic: **“My child, your sins are forgiven”** (Mk.2:9). In what ways do we identify with the paralytic?

What is forgiveness with such power and love? **“We have never seen anything like this”** (Mk.2:12).

Such an experience of divine mercy and forgiveness elicits praise and glory to God **“Blessed be the Lord the God of Israel from age to age. Amen. Amen”** Ps.40:2).



Forgiveness spells out a new uncompromising life, a direct witness with no double standards, **“there is no Yes and No about what we say to you”** (2 Cor. 1:18).

For Paul it opens a new life in the Spirit. It means **“God has anointed us with his seal and giving us the pledge, the Spirit”** (2 Cor. 1:22).

Tradition witnesses God’s action in the Church, his mercy, forgiveness and life in the Spirit.

See **Tradition** in terms of Scripture, Liturgy, Doctrine and Witness.

Scripture is proclaimed as the word of God. The Gospel shows the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins.

Liturgy forgives us in the penitential rite of Eucharist and in sacraments such as that of Baptism, Penance/Reconciliation and Anointing.

Doctrine expresses our faith in God and all that the Church teaches.

***“Faith we profess in one true Church,
Sin forgiven and grace restored,
Hope for the victory over death,
Life without end in Christ our Lord.”***

Witness to “Sin forgiven, grace restored” (*Firm is our Faith*). Live forgiven and forgive others.

FOR THE CHILDREN

Read the **Gospel** of today (*Mark 2:1-12*). Discuss how Jesus heals and forgives.

Discuss moments of forgiveness in **Worship** and prayer.

Doctrine is the teachings of the Church. See it today in the context of sin, forgiveness and new life (salvation).

When saying the **Lord’s Prayer**, note the part of ***“Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass.”***

Ask God to **forgive** you a particular sin and think of ways of forgiving others.

FOR TEENAGERS (*Shared Christian Praxis*)

My Present Action: ***What does forgiveness mean to you?***

Your Story and Vision: Share your experience of being forgiven and forgiving others.

Church’s Story: Discuss the Church’s teaching on forgiveness.

Church’s Story and Your Story: ***How has your life been with the Church?***

Your Vision and Church’s Vision: ***Where should you be going, with the Church?***

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH (CCC)

What is your relationship to the Lord and his Church? “Christ’s call to conversion continues to resound in the lives of Christians. This second conversion is an uninterrupted task for the whole Church who, “clasping sinners to her bosom, [is] at once holy and always in need of purification [and] follows constantly the path of penance and renewal.” This “contrite heart,” drawn and moved by grace to respond to the merciful love of God who loved us first.” (CCC. 1428)

LIFE EXPERIENCE

There is something lasting in classics compared to passing of pop culture. In David Copperfield, amongst the many Dicksonian characters, two strike me deeply. They are Mr. Pegotty and Emily, his adopted daughter. Emily elopes and ends up lost and forlorn. Pegotty goes in search of her. When he finds her, in spite of her shame, he brings her home. He plans a new life for her. He says: "Theer's mighty countries, far from heer. Our future life lays over the sea." (i) Such is the story of forgiveness, love and sacrifice. Surely, the most treasured moments in life are the experiences of love, which can be an inspiration and witness to others. Such insights go into the makings of a classic. Much of David Copperfield is considered to be Dickens' autobiography.

(i) **DICKENS** Charles. **David Copperfield**. Penguin Books. London, U.K.. 2007. (First Published 1850). p.911.

LITTLE ANGELINA

Angelina is an uninhibited little girl. I remember when she first came for Confession. "Hello," she said.

"Hello," said I, and asked her if she had any sins to confess.

"No," she replied, "but you can tell me yours."

It was not exactly a Pilgrim's Progress. Was I facing the feminine counterpart of the inimitable Harry East, "daring and honest by nature, and outspoken to an extent which alarmed all respectabilities...and with a constant fund of spirits which he did not feel bound to curb." (i)

Like he, does Angelina 'break rules of respectability,' even reverse them, inviting the priest to confess his sins?



(i) **HUGHES** Thomas. 'Tom Brown's Schooldays.' Wordsworth Editions Ltd., Ware, U.K. 2007. p.213.

Thomas Hughes in 'Tom Brown's Schooldays' recaptures the spirit of our childhood times. Although we may not fully identify with his experiences, they have elements of our school days from beginning to end, with studies, sport, fights and friends. Tom's days are at a boarding school in Rugby with all its experiences, good and bad. The carefree Harry East becomes his best friend and always ready for action. Arthur, by contrast, is physically handicapped but spiritually strong, earning Tom's confidence, making him aware of his wrongdoings and showing the way of forgiveness and prayer. "I am sorrowing as he would have sorrow – as I should wish to have sorrowed when I meet him again." (ii) Angelina is probably like Harry for adventure, and like Arthur who tells people to repent and confess their sins, even priests.

(ii) *Op. cit.* p.237.

IMPORTANT WORD: "God anointed us..and giving us the pledge, the Spirit" (2Cor.1:22)

To Paul, being forgiven and having new life in the Spirit, means "God has anointed us with his seal and giving us the pledge of the Spirit." *Arrabon* is the Greek word for pledge, meaning deposit, first instalment or down payment. Paul is saying that there is more in store for life in the Spirit. What we have already got is only a foretaste, the first instalment.

Arrabon is connected with the Hebrew word 'erabon, meaning guarantee or pledge. It derives from 'arab i.e. giving surety. It also translates as being earnest and ready to give all. The morphology of the word 'arab gives a number of insights, such as 'arabi (foreigner) or 'arabah (wilderness) or 'ereb (nightfall). The pledge of the Holy Spirit implies as well *hith-areb* (fellowship), 'areb (sweetness); and 'arob (an exchange) for light. Such could be the pledge and all its implications.

Pope Benedict sees “the Holy Spirit guiding the Church into all truth.”⁽ⁱ⁾ It fills us with joy and hope, ‘*Gaudium et Spes*,’ name of Vatican II Constitution of the Church in the Modern World.

(i) **SCHREK** Alan. *VATICAN II. The Crisis and the Promise*. St. Anthony Messenger Press, Ohio. 2005. p.130.

Alan Schrek looks at Vatican II in terms of crisis and promise. The crisis is what went wrong, the negative criticisms, claiming the Church has been misguided by the *Zeitgeist*, the spirit of the age, not the Holy Spirit, because of its liberalism, modernism and later scandals, “Satan’s smoke has made its way into the temple through the cracks.”⁽ⁱⁱ⁾ The promise is Church *semper reformanda*, under guidance of the Holy Spirit, and such is *aggiornamento*, the renewal of the Church, which is ongoing and endorsed by successive synods of bishops. The Council documents, including Catechism of the Catholic Church, are testimony to the inspiration of the Council Fathers. Schrek analyses the documents with tactful simplicity, highlighting key teachings and giving practical insights on what we can do. “The documents of Vatican II call each of us to embrace and to live to the fullest our Catholic Christian identity in every aspect of our lives.”⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾ We are the People of God gifted with the Word of God.

(ii) *Op. cit.* p.24

(iii) *Op. cit.* p.279

Watchword: “*People from all around would come to him*” (Mk.1:45)

Hebrew: ויבאו אליו מכל-ערינו

Wayevo’u ‘elayv mikol-’avarayv.

Greek: Ηρχοντο προς αυτον παντοθεν.

Erchonto pros auton pantothen.

Latin: *Conveniebant ad eum undique.*

Afrikaans: *Mense het van alle kante af na Hom toe gekom.*

Zulu: *Babuthana kuye bevela ezindaweni zonke.*

Xhosa: *Abantu ke babesiza kuye, bevela macala onke.*

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CATECHETICS

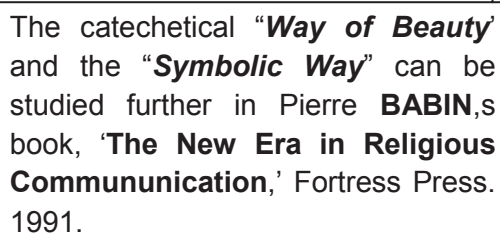
Lesson 61:

THE WAY OF BEAUTY AND THE SYMBOLIC WAY (Pierre Babin OMI)

Babin challenges the catechist to look more closely at “**Who** you teach.” The catechized belong to a culture which needs to be examined. A person living in a forest has a forest culture. Today’s forest is the electronic jungle with an **electronic** culture. We are living in an age where communication takes place predominantly in an **audio-visual** way through the audio-visual media, such as television, cinema, videos, offering us sensational exciting programmes and stimulating us, not only intellectually but more so affectively (emotionally). This is a culture that grabs our youth as it resonates with what Kierkegaard calls our primitive **instincts** and the profound voices within which Socrates, that ancient philosopher, would describe as the fire within, when he talked about the Greek word ‘**enthusiasm**.’ This is the level at which *Babin* challenges us to work in catechetics. It is a level of communication which he defines as participation, which is more than just speaking or listening. It is **modulation**.

'**Modulation**' may be compared to what ground is to the figure in a picture. It gives the background or atmosphere to what is depicted. It is what helps create the sense, feeling and deeper meaning of the figure. *Babin*, in fact, considers **modulation** or ground as being a greater part of a message than the figure itself. Mere words, which he defines as '**alphabetical communication**,' says less than modulation, that is voice, colours, mannerisms, gestures, position and so on. Modulation is seen as a whole complex of 'vibrations' such as intensities, pitch, rhythms and so on. Audio-visual communication and the electronic media heightens this where people become more in tune with what is happening than just a mere listening to words. The actions of Jesus and his miracles, including his parables, *Babin* describes as modulation as well. He speaks his word but it is the love, his warmth, personality and way he looks at people that gives depth. All this gives context and modulation of his message. Basically, Jesus communicated in an **audio-visual** way and it is the **electronic mass media** that capitalizes in that way today. It dominates most of the people's communication time, including our youth, the future generation and future of the Church. It is in this context that *Pierre Babin* proposes the '**Way of Beauty**' and the '**Symbolic Way**' as an approach for catechesis.

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The catechetical "**Way of Beauty**" and the "**Symbolic Way**" can be studied further in Pierre **BABIN**'s book, '**The New Era in Religious Communication**,' Fortress Press. 1991.