

# Forgiveness based on faith

7th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Feb. 23): (R3) Mark 2:1-12; (R1) Isaiah 43:18-19, 21-22, 24-25; (R2) 2 Corinthians 1:18-22.

Our Lord returned to Capernaum probably in the winter time. That explains why he was teaching in a house, probably Peter's. The house, like most modest houses of that day, was probably one story high and had a flat roof. The roof could be reached by an outdoor stairway. Often on hot summer nights people would sleep on their roofs. The roof consisted of flat beams, probably three feet apart, that reached from wall to wall. The space between the beams was generally filled with brushwood packed with clay. It was the easiest thing in the world to dig out the filling between the beams.

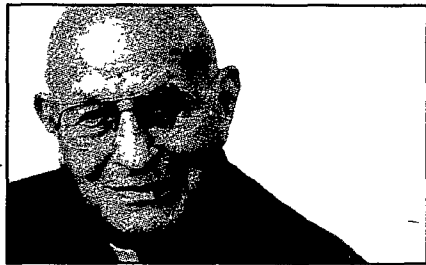
Four men carried a paralytic friend to Jesus. But due to the crowd they couldn't get into the house by the street entrance. So they climbed the outside stairway to the roof, made an opening between the beams and lowered their friend to Jesus.

Jesus was struck by the faith of the bearers. So to the paralytic he said, "Son, your sins are forgiven." In Jesus's time it was presumed that illness was in some way the result of sinfulness. Jesus disproves this alleged connection between sin and sickness. He forgave the man's sins, but he remained paralytic.

However, some of the Scribes among themselves said, "He is blaspheming. Who but God alone can forgive sins?"

Jesus knew what they were thinking so he said to them, "Which is easier, to say 'Your sins are forgiven' or to say 'Rise, pick up your mat and walk?'"

Then Jesus, to prove he could forgive sins, cured the paralytic. By working a miracle they all could see, the cure of the paralytic, he proved



Father **Albert Shamon**

## A word for Sunday

he could work the miracle they could not see, the forgiveness of sins.

A noteworthy insight in this Gospel story is the great faith of the friends of the paralytic. Jesus forgave the sins of the paralytic and cured him because of the great faith of his friends.

I am sure many of you know the story of the retail genius, J.C. Penny. In the early years of the Great Depression, Penny lost a large part of his fortune and the fruits of 30 years of hard work. He suffered a nervous breakdown. In the hospital, which he could ill afford, the 58-year-old businessman confronted his deepest fears and questioned his most dearly held values. He described the turning point later.

"One night I became possessed of the strange idea that the end of life had come for me, and that before morning I would be gone. I took a sedative, and went to sleep at nine o'clock. After an hour I awoke, still with the conviction that this was the last night on earth for me. I got up, wrote farewell letters to my family, returned to bed, and again fell asleep.

"To my surprise I was still alive the following morning. Feeling restless and apprehensive, I dressed and went downstairs to the dining room, intending to have breakfast. The

place had not yet been opened. I wandered disconsolately down the corridor. Presently the sound of singing led me to the chapel, where a small group of people was engaged in an early morning prayer meeting. They were singing the old, familiar hymn: 'Be not dismayed whate'er betide. God will take care of you.'

"Slipping inside, I sat down in one of the back seats. Someone read a passage of Scripture, which was followed by a prayer. Silently, yet in agony of spirit, I cried: 'Lord I can do nothing! Will you take care of me?'

"Something I can only explain as a miracle happened to me in that quiet chapel. An appalling weight was lifted from my spirit, and I passed from darkness to light. I had entered the room paralyzed in spirit and left it with new hope in life."

J.C. Penny had walked out of despair, not by his own power, but by the grace of God. Like the paralytic, Penny found a new life. That life is available today to all who will trust in Jesus.

Father Shamon is administrator of St. Isaac Jogues Chapel, Fleming.

## Daily Readings

Monday, February 24  
Sirach 1:1-10; Psalms 93:1-2, 5;  
Mark 9:14-29

Tuesday, February 25  
Sirach 2:1-11; Psalms 37:3-4,  
18-19, 27, 28, 39-40  
Mark 9:30-37

Wednesday, February 26  
Sirach 4:11-19; Psalms 119:165,  
171-172, 174, 175; Mark 9:38-40

Thursday, February 27  
Sirach 5:1-8; Psalms 131:4-6  
Mark 9:41-50

Friday, February 28  
Sirach 6:5-17; Psalms 119:129,  
16, 18, 27, 34, 35; Mark 10:1-12

Saturday, March 1  
Sirach 17:1-15; Psalms 103:1-3,  
19; Mark 10:13-16

## Kids' Chronicle

Answers from page 12:

1. Psalms, 2. Paul,
3. Acts, 4. Athenians,
5. Elizabeth, 6. Jonah

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