

Who are you?

We may have heard the saying, “To err is human, but to forgive is divine.” This phrase has some validity because it reveals that the human nature is weak and makes mistakes. Additionally, if we forgive others for their mistakes, we imitate the divine Master who also forgives us.

While all this is true, we may begin to think that our true identity is found in ‘erring’, in ‘sinning’. “I am nothing but a sinner and that is just who I am.” When we begin to identify our sins with who we truly are, we have accepted a falsehood—we have accepted a lie. Today, Jesus who is the Truth comes to reveal who we truly are.

All those people in the Gospel were seeking to be healed through the pools in Jerusalem because they believed it was the angel of God stirring up the waters and so whoever got into the pool first would be healed. That is why the paralytic says, “I have no one to put me into the pool when it stirs up and when I try to get in there someone else gets in there before me.”

But the crippled man did not realize that Jesus was the new Temple whose waters give life wherever it goes. So when he asked the man, “Do you want to be healed?”, he was also challenging the man to look forward to the Cross, “Why do you turn to earthly water to heal you? Be washed in the blood and water flowing from the temple of my body which will give you true healing.”

But if Jesus’ came to bring healing, why didn’t he heal all those who lay by the pool? Jesus’ intention in healing the crippled man was to show visibly the healing he carried out invisibly. His physical healing was a sign of the deep inner healing the crippled man received through the forgiveness of sins; it was a sign that this man was LIBERATED from the captivity to sin and SET FREE to serve the Lord.

But why did Jesus heal on the Sabbath? The Sabbath commemorated the time when God rested on the seventh day, but it was also a reminder of the Israelites’ freedom from Egypt:

You shall remember that you were a servant in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out thence with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the sabbath day (Deut 5:15)

When Jesus heals on the SABBATH, he is doing more than pointing BACKWARDS towards the freedom from Egypt, he is also pointing FORWARD to that ETERNAL SABBATH in heaven where we will receive freedom from sin and death through his Glorious Resurrection. Jesus did not heal everyone physically because he was pointing forward to a time when he would establish the definitive healing for all peoples.

This healing is made available to us through Confession where Jesus sees the depths of our sickness and heals it. He sees how wounded we have become through sin and he desires to restore us to our true identity in the Father. He looks at us and reveals the Father's heart, "You are not your sin, this is not who you are, this is not who I have created you to be for I have redeemed you through the blood of my Son to be my beloved child. THAT is who you ARE"

To err is NOT human...

As we approach the holiest time in the year of our liturgical calendar, let us prepare to meet our Lord unhindered by sin and be reminded of our true identity through confession as St. John Paul II proclaims:

We are NOT the sum of our weaknesses and failures; we ARE the sum of the Father's love for us and our real capacity to become the image of his Son.