

Homily – Mark 1: 29-39
5th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B
6th/7th February 2021, Sooeey/ Riverstown

Most of us are familiar with Lourdes, the Catholic shrine in southern France built at the place where the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to a young girl, St. Bernadette Soubirous (siiberu), in 1858. Pilgrims today continue to throng to our Blessed Mother's shrine, hoping to be cured of their ailments. Over the decades, thousands have left behind their crutches and braces as silent witnesses to the Lord's power to make them well.

And sites of holy apparitions and miraculous healings ranging from Lourdes, Fatima, Guadalupe, and Medjugorje, to the holy sites in our own land, have drawn pilgrims from all over the world throughout the ages. These seekers have made their way to sacred temples, grottoes, and hillsides in the hope of finding healing and strength. Some dismiss such journeys of Faith as childish piety, inappropriate in an age of therapeutic advances such as our own. But healing is an essential element of the Gospel message.

Well, the Gospel passage of today elucidates the healing ministry of 'Jesus, the Divine Healer' and we learn that Jesus spent time with His Father recharging his spiritual batteries.

The Gospel tells us that true discipleship means getting involved in giving selfless service to others. During the Sabbath day, Jesus took part in the synagogue worship, taught with authority, healed Simon's mother-in-law and, after sunset, "*cured many who were sick with various diseases, and drove out many demons.*" Thus, Jesus spent most of his time ministering to the needs of others, giving healing, forgiveness and a new beginning to many.

Well, in curing the sick, comforting the sorrowful, and freeing the possessed, Jesus was in fact healing the broken-hearted, and today He invites all of us His followers to be part of that healing ministry.

I remember reading an incident from the life of Mother Teresa: an incident in which she helped a woman to have a spiritual healing at her deathbed.

Well, Mother Teresa once happened to pick up a woman from a garbage dump from the streets of Calcutta and the poor lady was burning with fever. She was in her last days and her only lament was this: "My son did this to me". And Mother told her: "Forgive your son. In a moment of madness, when he was not himself, he did a thing for which he would regret. Be a mother to him, forgive him". In fact, the woman was not concerned that she was dying. What saddened her most

was the fact that her son did not want her. But still, just before she died in the arms of Mother Teresa, the old woman whispered: “I forgive my son”. Was it not the healing power of Jesus that the woman experienced through this great saint?

Well, bringing *healing and wholeness* is Jesus’ ministry even today. We all need healing for our minds, our memories, and our broken relationships, and at the same time we are all called to be instruments for Jesus’ healing work in our own families and in our own communities. And our own healing process is completed only when we are ready to help others in their needs and to focus on things outside ourselves.

Henri J.M. Nouwen has a beautiful anecdote in his book **The Wounded Healer** :“One day a young fugitive, trying to hide himself from the enemy, entered a small village. The people were kind to him and offered him a place to stay. But when the soldiers who sought the fugitive asked where he was hiding, everyone became very fearful. The soldiers threatened to burn the village and kill everyone in it, unless the

young man was handed over to them before dawn. The people went to the minister and asked him what to do. The minister, torn between handing over the boy to the enemy, or having his people killed, withdrew to his room and started reading his Bible, hoping to find an answer before dawn. After many hours, in the early morning, his eyes fell on these words: “It is better that one man dies than that the whole people be lost.” Then the minister closed the Bible, called the soldiers and told them where the boy was hidden. And after the soldiers led the fugitive away to be killed, there was a feast in the village because the minister had saved the lives of the people.

But the minister did not celebrate. Overcome with a deep sadness, he remained in his room. That night an angel came to him, and asked, “What have you done?” He said: “I handed over the fugitive to the enemy.” Then the angel said: “But don’t you know that you have handed over the Messiah?” “How could I know?” the minister replied anxiously. Then the angel said: “If, instead of reading your Bible, you had visited this young man just once and looked into his eyes, you would have known.”

Dear brothers and sisters, no one escapes being wounded. All of us are wounded people, be it

physically, emotionally, mentally or spiritually. But then, Jesus the Divine healer is with us as one who knows us, one who understands us and one who cares for us. And with all our experiences of suffering, illness and desolation, if we could still look into the eyes of the other, if we could look into the eyes of the wounded and become wounded healers, the world we live in, will be a far better place. God bless you all, **Amen.**