

Closing Prayer

Out of your power and compassion, O God,
you sent your Son into our afflicted world
to proclaim the day of salvation.

Heal the brokenhearted;
bind up our wounds.
Bring us health of body and spirit
and raise us to new life in your service.

We make our prayer through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God for ever and ever.

Opening prayers · Ordinary Time 5, Year B²

Proper 1

*Sunday between 4 and 10 February inclusive, if earlier than
the Second Sunday before Lent · Fifth Sunday in Ordinary
Time*

Principal Service readings

Isaiah 40.21-31	The Holy One is incomparable
Psalm 147.1-12,21c [or 147.1-12]	Praise the Lord who is great, all-powerful and wise
1 Corinthians 9.16-23	Paul feels compelled to preach the gospel
Mark 1.29-39	Jesus cures the sick; prays alone; and goes to proclaim the message

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
speak to our hearts in the stillness,
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

Gospel Reading

The Galilean ministry of Jesus

²⁹As soon as Jesus and his disciples left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. ³⁰Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. ³¹He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

³²That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. ³³And the whole city was gathered around the door. ³⁴And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

³⁵In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. ³⁶And Simon and his companions hunted for him. ³⁷When they found him, they said to him, 'Everyone is searching for you.' ³⁸He answered, 'Let us go on to the neighbouring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do.' ³⁹And he

² *Opening prayers : scripture-related collects for the years A, B and C from the sacramentary* / International Commission on English in the Liturgy. – Norwich : Canterbury Press, 1999.

went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

Mark 1.29-39 NRSV¹

Comments and Questions

There is a tradition that Mark got his information from Simon Peter. If so, then we are reading what Peter himself told Mark about his own house and his mother-in-law.

After an initial confrontation with the forces of evil (1.12-13), Mark presents his readers with a succession of healing miracles (1.29-31, 44-45; 2.1-12; 3.1-5; 5.24-34; 7.31-37; 8.22-26; 10.46-52). Miracle stories (exorcisms, healings, resuscitations, nature miracles) occupy 200 verses of Mark (more than the Passion narrative), yet they are often accompanied by an injunction to silence.

Healing miracles exhibit a certain pattern: (1) the arrival of the miracle worker; (2) a description of the illness or problem; (3) a request for healing, implicit or explicit; (4) the healing action in gesture or word; (5) the effecting of the mighty deed; (6) acclamation by a crowd or some external demonstration of the healing.

Those first mentioned are explicitly as witnesses. Peter's mother-in-law shows the ideal of discipleship as service of others which Jesus addresses to all the disciples, when he says that the greatest of them should be their servant (10.43-44), an ideal he himself fulfils (10.45).

Many sick people gather around Jesus, perhaps reflecting the hope expressed by nonbiblical Jewish texts that Satan will be conquered in the messianic age and disease would disappear.

After a day of confrontation with evil and sickness Jesus rises early and retreats to a deserted place (1.35), a traditional place for encounter with God. When he is found by the disciples, he departs promptly, so sustaining the rapid pace of this first part of the gospel.

¹ *New Revised Standard Version Bible* is copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

Quotations

1

We modern people think of miracles as the suspension of the natural order, but Jesus meant them to be the restoration of the natural order. The Bible tells us that God did not originally make the world to have disease, hunger, and death in it. Jesus has come to redeem where it is wrong and heal the world where it is broken. His miracles are not just proofs that he has power but also wonderful foretastes of what he is going to do with that power. Jesus' miracles are not just a challenge to our minds, but a promise to our hearts, that the world we all want is coming.

Tim Keller, 1950–

2

I never have any difficulty believing in miracles, since I experienced the miracle of a change in my own heart.

Saint Augustine of Hippo, 354–430

3

The whole reason why we pray is to be united into the vision and contemplation of God to whom we pray.

Julian of Norwich, 1343–after 1416

Related topics

For further study:

Mystery of suffering; paschal mystery; healing; sacrament of anointing; salvation; reign of God; social justice; sacraments; Christology; ministry of healing