



Christian Art

Daily Gospel Reading and Art Reflection

Mark 2:1-12

The Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins

Forgive Us Our Trespassing
Spray painting by Banksy,
Executed in 2010
Spray paint on canvas,
issued as poster in 2011

Daily Gospel Reading

Mark 2:1-12

When Jesus returned to Capernaum, word went round that he was back; and so many people collected that there was no room left, even in front of the door. He was preaching the word to them when some people came bringing him a paralytic carried by four men, but as the crowd made it impossible to get the man to him, they stripped the roof over the place where Jesus was; and when they had made an opening, they lowered the stretcher on which the paralytic lay. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, 'My child, your sins are forgiven.' Now some scribes were sitting there, and they thought to themselves, 'How can this man talk like that? He is blaspheming. Who can forgive sins but God?' Jesus, inwardly aware that this was what they were thinking, said to them, 'Why do you have these thoughts in your hearts? Which of these is easier: to say to the paralytic, "Your sins are forgiven" or to say, "Get up, pick up your stretcher and walk"? But to prove to you that **the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins,**' - he turned to the paralytic - 'I order you: get up, pick up your stretcher, and go off home.' And the man got up, picked up his stretcher at once and walked out in front of everyone, so that they were all astounded and praised God saying, 'We have never seen anything like this.'

Reflection on the Street Art Poster

Our Gospel reading today states that *'the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins'*. So for us, recipients of this forgiveness of sins, what does that exactly mean? Forgiveness is not the end, but a beginning. Forgiveness is not the end of a bad chapter or a more difficult period in life; forgiveness has a positive impact for the future. It is the start of a new life. So after leaving the confessional we all may feel relieved that the old sins have been forgiven, but it is equally important to leave the confessional realising that we have been given a genuine new start, a new dawn. The Holy Spirit has just removed the shackles of the old sins, so now will help us to start afresh so that we can become true co-operators with God in the new life and freedom we have been given.

But we will only remain as free as our own ability to forgive others. And that is not always easy. We will often opt for offering half a forgiveness, such as thinking 'I will forgive but I will never forget'. But we have to remember that forgiveness is an act of courage, not of weakness. It takes courage to forgive, as it requires effort and even pain at times. Forgiveness is about willing to get hurt and wounded. But that is what true courage is! We have to take the first step, make the first move. We cannot simply wait for the other person to make the first move and only then forgive. That would mean that we are bargaining with God and His precious gift of forgiveness. Christ forgave, and that's it. He didn't bargain first or wait for someone to make the first move.

Banksy's *Forgive us Our Trespassing* street artwork illustrates what forgiveness is not. Here we see a kneeling boy next to a pot of paint, having painted a halo above himself and implying that he forgave his own sins. Forgiveness always requires the other. It is God who will forgive us, or our neighbour, or a fellow seminarian, friend, or colleague... And it involves each of us forgiving other people not just with words, but in the true depths of our heart... having the courage to open the doors to a new start, a new dawn.