

17 January 2025 - Friday of the 1st ordinary week (odd-numbered years)

[Heb 4, 1-5.11; Mark 2, 1-12](#)

Homily

When Jesus was in Galilee, the region that Isaiah had already called the 'Galilee of the Gentiles' (Is. 7:23-9:1, quoted in Matt. 4:15), he was on the borders of the land of Israel and was often confronted with those whom the Jews called 'Gentiles' or 'pagans'. The text we have just read from Mark describes in symbolic language this encounter and all the tensions it generates.

After healing the leper (yesterday's Gospel), Jesus went through the deserted places where people came to him from all over. A few days later he returns to Capernaum and we learn that he is 'at home' (*en oikô*) -- not 'in the house' (*è oikia*) of Simon Peter (where he had previously healed Peter's mother-in-law), nor in his own house (because he was from Nazareth), but quite simply 'at home'. The house in question here is *the house of Israel*.

This house is so tightly closed in on itself that not only is there no room for anyone else inside, but there is also no room at the door. Then the paralytic arrives, representing the pagan world, paralysed by his sin, that is, his lack of knowledge of the true God. He is carried by four men symbolically representing the four cardinal corners, and therefore all the nations. The door of the House of Israel, which wants to keep Jesus for itself, is closed to them. No matter, they remove tiles from the roof and lower the paralytic with his stretcher before Jesus. Jesus, touched by 'their faith', tells the paralytic that his sins are forgiven.

This is the beginning of a long confrontation between Jesus and the Scribes, which we will see throughout Mark's Gospel, right up to the Cross. Some of the scribes were **sitting** there and reasoning in their hearts' (the word "sitting" had disappeared from the old translation of the liturgical lectionary, but it is very important). They represent the seated, settled part of the house of Israel, closed to the Prophet who manifests himself within it, just as it is closed to everything outside the people of Israel.

Once, in spite of all the obstacles -- those of his own sins as well as those set up by the house of Israel itself -- the meeting is established between Jesus and the paralytic, Jesus heals him. He does not, however, invite him to return or to remain in the house of Israel; he sends him home: 'take your stretcher and go home'.

Document extrait du [site de l'abbaye Notre-Dame de Scourmont](#), qui se trouve sur le territoire de Forges, à sept kilomètres au sud de la ville de Chimay, en Belgique. Notre-Dame de Scourmont est une abbaye de l'Ordre Cistercien de la Stricte Observance.

This is a powerful and disturbing message for the Church as a whole and for each of our ecclesial communities. Perhaps we are often so closed in on ourselves and on what goes on within our walls that we forget that there is a crowd outside and that it cannot enter because we do not leave a free space in front of the door. So let's recognise God's action when some people find a way in through the window or the roof. And above all, let us recognise the mystery of their relationship with God, even when He sends them back to 'their home', where they are called to bear witness to the grace they have received. Even when they do not become inhabitants of 'our house', let us, like the people of Capernaum, be astonished and give glory to God by saying: 'We have never seen anything like this.'

Armand VEILLEUX