

CONNECT! SUNDAY REFLECTION

4th Sunday of Lent | For Sunday, March 14, 2021

A Promise of Healing and Salvation

Written by Br. John-Marmion Villa

2 Chronicles 36:14-16, 19-23

Ephesians 2:4-10

John 3:14-21



FILL ME
WITH YOUR
LIGHT AND
YOUR HOPE.

Most of us would easily recognize the symbol of the medical profession. It is the symbol created by Moses at the instruction of the Lord (cf [Num 21:5-9](#)): the serpent hoisted on a pole, so that those who had been bitten by the snakes would be healed by looking upon the serpent on the pole. A physical healing was desperately sought after in the days of the Israelite sojourn in the desert. But today, the desperate search for healing continues ... certainly for physical ailments. How many of us are equally desperate for healing for our spiritual ailments?

Lent is a timely season wherein we remind ourselves that we are human beings, made of a body and a soul, each with its own inherent flaws, and each with its own remedy. The Greek word used in John 3:17 is σώζω *sōzō*, meaning “to save” or “to cure.” From what? Bodily ailments? Physical healings are all over the Gospels. Nevertheless, we know that the body is destined for decay (cf [1 Jn 2:17](#)), but the soul is meant to live on into eternity, and eventually, the body will be reunited with the soul (cf [CCC 990](#)). So what is the ailment of soul — which is meant to live forever — for which we desperately look for a σώζω *sōzō*, a cure, or someone who can save, a Savior, who can redeem what seems irreparably damaged?

The life of [St. Francis](#) can give us a helpful insight for us during this Lent.

“In his love of utter humility, Francis dedicated himself to the service of the lepers; by devoting himself to the care of such pitiful outcasts, he would learn to disregard the world and his own self, before attempting to teach such self-contempt to others. He had always had a horror of lepers, above any other class of human beings; but now,

grace was infused into him in greater measure and he devoted himself to waiting on their needs with such humility of heart that he washed their feet and bound their sores, drawing out the pus and wiping away the corrupt matter. In the excess of his indescribable fervor, he did not even hesitate to kiss their ulcerous sores, kissing the dust with his mouth (cf [Lam 3:29](#)). He would expose himself to every kind of indignity that he might bring his rebellious lower nature into subjection to the rule of the spirit; so he would gain complete control of himself and be at peace, once he had subdued to the enemy that was part of his own nature.”

Whereas we don't often admit it to ourselves, much less to anyone else, even a priest in confession, we know that we all have a “rebellious lower nature” inside of us, an instinctual impulse towards mediocrity, hedonistic pleasure, self-justification, etc. When we give ourselves the chance, we recognize that our character flaws control us more than we prefer, but since we don't know another way of operating, we feel confined or trapped in our limiting beliefs behind a façade of confidence or success. It is precisely this state for which we look for a cure. We don't normally like to call this ‘sin,’ but we must see it as such for it is only for our sin that Jesus offers the cure.

St. Francis' example shows us that that rebellious lower nature can be subdued, not only by our own effort, but through the “Cross of Christ [that] will part the waters of the sea like Moses' rod, and [you] will traverse the desert to the promised land of the living, where [you] will enter by the miraculous power of the Cross, having crossed the Jordan of our human mortality.”

The Cross without Resurrection is harsh; but the Resurrection without the Cross is flimsy. In Jesus, we have access to both! Right now, in this season, our path towards Calvary Hill culminates in a few weeks with Easter. Lent has been a long journey that might have started well before Ash Wednesday 2021 for so many of us. Nevertheless, in these last few weeks before Easter, and as we continue to learn to prefer the light over our darkness, the promise of salvation — of $\sigma\acute{\omega}\zeta\omega$ *sōzō* — is closer and closer. Can you taste it yet? Eternal life is closer to us the more we experience the freedom of the light. The invitation is there daily ... will you accept it?

Br. John-Marmion Villa

PRAYER

Blessed Jesus,
in the comfort of your love,
I lay before you
the memories that haunt me,
the anxieties that perplex me,
the despair that frightens me,
and my frustration
at my inability to think clearly.
Help me to discover
your forgiveness in my memories
and know your peace in my distress.
Touch me, O Lord,
and fill me with your light and your hope.
Amen.