

Memorial of Saint Agatha February 5, 2018 St. Agnes Church

A theme that runs through Mark's gospel is "Jesus the healer".
Jesus has the power to heal the sick.
It was divine compassion and mercy that caused him to do so.
He saw the condition of the sick. He saw their suffering.
Not only physically but socially: many of the sick became outcasts because they were unclean.
Not only physically and socially, but many of the sick became spiritual outcasts.
It was a typical conclusion that sickness was a sign of sin.
If someone was sick, it was thought that they had offended God in some way.
It was a sign that there was sin in their life.

As he travels Jesus draws great crowds. People who were sick sought him out.
Jesus heals as many as he can.
Sometimes the healing is intentional. Jesus speaks to the person, touches the person.
But the crowds learn that this is not necessary.
They learn that all they need to do is to touch Jesus cloak and they will be healed.
So they line the streets, the market places, and wait for him to walk by.
And behold, as many as touch his cloak...are healed.

In today's 1st Scripture Reading we hear of great joy among the people
because the ark of the covenant is in their midst.
God is dwelling among them.

In the early Christian communities they would have connected this with Jesus Christ
and they would have said "this is how God has come to dwell among us".

It is not without reason that Mark uses the Greek word 'esozonto'
which translates ""they were made well".
This word 'esozonto' also means "saved". They were all saved.

In a general sense, the word "saved" means "God has freed me from what imprisons me;
God has helped me."
But in a very specific Christian sense it means
"God has judged me worthy to share in his eternal Kingdom.
God has saved me from eternal death. God has saved me from Hell."
This is only possible through divine intervention.
Only by the grace of God can anyone hope to enter the Kingdom.

When we hear Jesus saying to someone "your faith has saved you" we have to be careful.
Salvation is a process. It's outcome will not be known until the moment of final judgment.
Saving grace must be embraced every moment of every day.
Even after receiving it, it is probable that a person is going to sin.
Now, when a person recognizes saving grace in a particular moment
the person might say (as we should all say) "I pledge my soul to You, O God"
but no one shares in the fullness of salvation
until the limits and imperfections of humanity are completely transcended.

Jesus' saving work restores us, restores all of creation, to harmony.
The challenge of those who are being saved is to be protected from future sin
and to contribute to the building up of the Christian community.

Today's prayer: "O Lord, we rejoice that you have come to live among us. Through Jesus
Christ Your Son, renew our hope in his power to free us from sin and its consequences. Amen!"