

Homily – 17<sup>th</sup> September 2010 at 5pm

St. Matthew's Church

May I speak in the name of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

This evening's service is centred around those who are sick, and in our prayers we have remembered all those who are known to us who are ill and those to whom we minister in our work in hospitals all over Europe.

The Scriptures are full of accounts of healing, and in our readings we heard of two such miraculous healings of the sick. The first was the account of the healing of the Shunnamite's Son by Elisha. The child had been granted to the Shunnamite

woman through the intercession of Elisha and in her trouble she returns to him and he heals the child through this actions and prayers.

The second reading sees Christ in Simon's house. Simon's mother-in-law is ill and Jesus, by rebuking her illness, heals her. In response to his healing action she immediately resumes her responsibilities and begins to serve them.

As the sun sets, many sick people are brought to Jesus at Simon's house and he lays hands on them and heals them. He casts out demons who recognise him for who he is – the Son of God. His power is such that the crowds would have him stay with them, but he is drawn onwards to

proclaim the good news of the gospel throughout the whole area.

As I reflected upon the reading from Luke's gospel it struck me that Simon Peter's mother-in-law was healed to serve. In her illness she wasn't able to fulfil her potential, but following her healing through Christ she was able to be of use to those who were her guests. And it strikes me that we, too, are healed to serve.

Henri Nouwen, in his book *The Wounded Healer*, suggests that through a humanity which is common to both care-giver and care-receiver, for example chaplain and patient, the woundedness of the care-giver can be a source of strength and healing when caring for others. We as ministers are

called to recognise the suffering of our time in our hearts and we can make this recognition the starting point of our service to other people. But it means becoming vulnerable in the service of others, leaving ourselves open as fellow human beings with the same wounds and suffering as those for whom we care – all of us being made in the image of Christ.

And this is the paradox – we heal from our own wounds, our woundedness makes us whole, our pain is the source of our power and strength to minister to others. After all, who better to understand difficulties than a person who understands them from his or her own frame of reference. Now there will be some of us here this evening, or perhaps most of us here this evening, who know, or

have known, physical or mental or emotional pain and suffering. Who have a reference for personal pain out of which to minister. But I want to suggest that all of us participate in the healing from sin bought by the cross. We are healed from sin and death to serve God.

And we can learn from Simon's mother-in-law in the immediacy of her response. You see, Scripture also tells us the story of Mary and Martha. While Mary sat at Christ's feet and listened to him, Martha bustled around the kitchen serving people. But she complained bitterly that her sister wasn't helping. She served grudgingly on that occasion. But Simon's mother-in-law is so glad to be healed, to be better, that she serves with immediacy and without

complaint – glad to give something back to the one who had healed her wounds.

And so I suggest that we, as wounded healers, follow the example of Christ who is the ultimate wounded healer, and use our suffering to serve others, being drawn onwards to proclaim good news to those to whom we minister and to reach our full potential as ministers and servants of God.

And now may the everlasting Father bless us with his blessings everlasting. Amen.