

The Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

The Man Who Was Carried

Missale Romanum 1962 · Proper of Time · 27 September 2026

A homily

There is a man in today's Gospel who never says a word. Our Lord speaks to him twice. The scribes speak, though only inside themselves: "He blasphemeth." At the end the whole multitude glorifies God. The men who bring him are silent too, but at least they do something: they carry him. He does nothing. He is carried in and laid down. He is forgiven before he has asked for anything. He is told to rise and go home, and he goes.

Keep that man in view; the rest of this Mass can be heard around him.

Listen again to the Collect. An old English missal renders it: "May the influence of thy mercy, O Lord, direct our souls: for without thy help we can do nothing well pleasing to thee." The Latin is plainer still: *sine te*, without thee. Not without thy help, as if God lent us a tool and stepped back. Without God himself, we cannot please God. That is not a sentence of despair. It is a sentence about where to stand.

Saint Paul stands there. Today's Epistle opens his first letter to Corinth with thanks: "I give thanks to my God always for you, for the grace of God that is given you in Christ Jesus." They are "made rich in him, in all utterance and in all knowledge." A warm compliment, until you read on. Two verses after the lesson ends, Paul begs them "that there be no schisms among you". The church he thanks God for is breaking into parties.

Saint John Chrysostom saw what Paul was doing: he is not congratulating the Corinthians but thanking God for them, and "a favor is not a debt nor a requital nor a payment." And he presses it home: "If therefore it be grace, why are you high-minded?" Their speech and knowledge, the very things they most admired, stand on the list of things given.

What am I proudest of? My mind, my competence, my good name? Paul's list would include them all. None of them is a wage.

Now back to the man on the bed. Jesus, "seeing their faith", spoke to him. Whose faith? Here the saints do not agree. Saint Jerome says plainly: not the faith of the man who was brought, but of those who brought him, because he could not come in by himself. Saint Ambrose, on Saint Luke's telling, says the same: great is the Lord, who pardons some for the merit of others. Saint Mark and Saint Luke tell us that the bearers let the man down through the roof, and Chrysostom says the sick man too had part in the faith, "for he would not have suffered himself to be let down, unless he had believed."

We need not settle their argument; the Gospel says only "their faith". But both sides grant this much: the man did not come by himself. Whatever faith he had, it brought him only as far as he was carried; and if he had any, that too was given him.

Then the first word: "Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee." Son. Saint Jerome marvels at it: a man helpless and despised, whom, he says, the priests would not deign to touch, and the Lord calls him son. He came to be healed and is forgiven instead; he might have complained, Chrysostom says, but he says nothing, and "gives himself up to the power of the healer."

The scribes are scandalised, and they are right about one thing: only God can forgive sins. So our Lord asks them: "Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins are forgiven thee: or to say, Arise, and walk?" Forgiving sins, Chrysostom explains, is the greater work, but it cannot be seen; so the Lord adds the lesser work that can be seen, "that the greater also and the unseen may thereby receive its proof." "But that you may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins": rise, take up your bed, go home.

Mark those two words: on earth. Not in a private corner of the soul where I tell myself I am forgiven, but on earth, in a voice that can be heard. Saint Thomas Aquinas asks how this shows that Christ is God, when the Apostles also forgave sins, and

answers: they had the power by way of ministry, not of authority. So in the sacrament of Penance a man says aloud, on earth, a sentence that only God can make true; and the penitent, like the man on the bed, brings nothing to pay with: only his sins and his sorrow for them, and the sorrow too is God's gift.

And the crowd "glorified God that gave such power to men." Chrysostom thinks they understood only half: they took Jesus for one come from God, but not yet for the Son of God. Saint Hilary hears fitting praise: a power and a way have been given to men, to all who receive them, through his word, for the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the return to heaven. Heard so, the Gospel that began with a man who was carried ends with thanks for a gift, as the Epistle began.

The Mass itself has that shape. Its lessons open with Paul's "I give thanks", and its last prayer, in that same old English, says: "Being fed, O Lord, with this holy sacrifice: we give thee thanks, humbly beseeching thy mercy: that thou wouldst make us worthy of what we have received." Thanks at the beginning, thanks at the end, and in the middle a man who was carried.

Before that prayer the Communion verse gives a command: "Bring up sacrifices, and come into his courts." But if without God we can do nothing pleasing to God, what are we to bring? Saint Augustine answers from that very psalm: "Confession is a present unto God." And: "Enter with an humble heart into the house of God, and thou hast entered with a present. But if thou art proud, thou enterest empty."

So the sacrifice this verse asks for is the one present that claims nothing as its own and costs nothing but pride. "What hast thou," Paul asks those same Corinthians, "that thou hast not received?" Our confession and our humble heart are his gifts too. We carry them into his courts when we come up to

this altar, and he is pleased to call them a present. What he gives us there is the holy sacrifice that last prayer thanks him for, "what we have received": Christ himself, his Body given up on the Cross and his Blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins, the Lord who died and rose again.

Does this make us passive, lying on our beds waiting to be carried? No. Christ's last words to the man are commands: arise, take up thy bed, go into thy house. Saint Thomas notes that the man had three troubles: he lay in bed, he was carried by others, and he could not walk. So Christ says "Arise" to the man who lay there; because he was carried, he commanded him to carry; and because he could not walk, he bade him walk. Grace is not taken back when we stand up. It is what we stand in.

So, three things for this week. First, bring what you cannot mend to the place on earth where the power to forgive has been given: go to confession, with your sins and your sorrow, and nothing to pay with. Second, be one of the bearers. Someone you know cannot come in by himself: too ashamed, too tired, too far off. You cannot forgive him, but you can carry him. Saint Ambrose tells the sinner who despairs of pardon to call in the Church to pray for him. Be that Church for someone: pray for him by name, and if you can, bring him. Third, take the thing you are proudest of and thank God for it, as Paul did for the Corinthians: as a gift, not a wage.

And do not be afraid of the end. Paul tells those quarrelsome Corinthians that Christ "will confirm you unto the end without crime." Chrysostom hears a warning in it; Saint Thomas hears a promise. Either way, the confirming is Christ's. The end is given as the beginning was. The man on the bed went home carrying what had carried him. Without God we cannot please God; with him, the most helpless of us is called son, forgiven on earth, and sent home.

Note on Sources and Delivery

Audience and occasion. An adult parish assembly, at the Mass *Dominica decima octava post Pentecosten*, II classis, of the 1962 *Missale Romanum*, editio typica, pp. 410–411, nos. 1669–1678, for the occurrence of 27 September 2026.

Length and pace. The spoken body runs to 1,438 words, about 11.1 to 12.0 minutes at an unhurried 120 to 130 words a minute by arithmetic alone; no one has delivered or timed it. It was read through in full, silently, for sense and ease of speech.

Relation to the reviewed readings. Of the expansive study's three readings of the whole Mass, the homily follows the third, *Thanks at Both Ends, and a Man Who Was Carried: The Grace the Collect Confesses*: the Collect's *sine te*, the Epistle's thanks for gifts given, the man carried to Christ, Augustine's contrite heart at the Communion, and the Postcommunion's thanks and plea. From the second, *Power on Earth to Forgive Sins: The Paralytic in His Own City and the Altar of the Covenant*, it takes Mt 9:6 alone: the unseen forgiveness proved by the seen healing, and Aquinas's distinction between Christ's authority and the Apostles' ministry. Its application to Penance is the homily's own. So are the statements that faith, sorrow, confession and the humble heart are themselves God's gifts, which apply the Collect and 1 Cor 4:7 (which the study quotes) and are not Augustine's gloss. The first reading, *The Peace of a City Still Being Built*, is not used. Three disagreements the study keeps are spoken: Jerome and Ambrose against Chrysostom on whose faith Christ saw; Chrysostom against Hilary on the crowd's praise at Mt 9:8; and Chrysostom against Aquinas, with Ambrosiaster and Cornelius a Lapide, on whether 1 Cor 1:8 accuses or promises. These applications and the joins between elements, including the hearing of that praise beside the Epistle's thanksgiving, are credited to no Father. The Introit, Gradual, Alleluia, Offertory and Secret are left to the studies.

Texts quoted, and their route. Scripture is the Douay–Rheims, Challoner's revision, at the canonical verses. The Collect and the Postcommunion are quoted in the anonymous English printed by Eugene Cummiskey at Philadelphia in 1861, a historical study aid and not an approved liturgical translation of the 1962 Missal. Chrysostom on Matthew and Augustine on Ps 95 are quoted in the English of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, re-read in the tracked CCEL texts; Chrysostom on First Corinthians as the study prints it from New Advent's delivery of that series, not re-read here. Jerome, Ambrose, Hilary and Aquinas are reported in English glosses of their Latin. Ambrose on Luke, and Hilary and Aquinas on Matthew, were re-read in the tracked transcriptions of Migne and the Venice optical text; Jerome on Matthew and Aquinas on First Corinthians are reported as the study reads them.

Exact loci. Collect, no. 1670; Epistle, 1 Cor 1:4–8, no. 1671, with 1:10 beyond the lesson, and 4:7; Gospel, Mt 9:1–8, no. 1674, with Mk 2:4 and Lk 5:19 for the roof; Communion, Ps 95:8–9, no. 1677; Postcommunion, no. 1678. Chrysostom, *Homilies on Matthew* 29, 1 (the sick man's share in the faith) and 2 (the healer's power, the unseen proved by the seen, and the crowd); *Homilies on First Corinthians* 2, 1–5, on 1:4–5, and 7, on 1:8. Jerome, *Commentarii in Matthaeum* I, on 9:1–2 (*non ejus fidem qui offerebatur, sed eorum qui offerebant; quem sacerdotes non dignabantur attingere*). Ambrose, *Expositio in Lucam* V.11 (*Magnus Dominus qui aliorum merito ignoscit aliis; adhibe Ecclesiam quae pro te precetur*). Aquinas, *Super Matthaeum* c. 9 (*per viam administrationis, non auctoritatis; quia portabatur, praecepit ut portaret; quia ire non poterat, dixit, Et ambula*), and *Super I ad Corinthios* c. 1, lect. 1, on 1:8. Hilary, *Commentarius in Matthaeum* VIII.8 (*potestas hominibus ac via data sit per verbum ejus*). Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 95, 9.

References

- *Missale Romanum ex decreto Sacrosancti Concilii Tridentini restitutum, Summorum Pontificum cura recognitum*, editio typica (Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1962), CMAA facsimile, pp. 410–411, nos. 1669–1678.
- *The Roman Missal, Translated into the English Language for the Use of the Laity* (Philadelphia: Eugene Cummiskey, 1861), pp. 444–445 (XVIII Sunday after Pentecost, Collect and Postcommunion).
- The Holy Bible, Douay–Rheims version, Challoner's revision: Ps 95:8; Mt 9:1–8; Mk 2:4; Lk 5:19; 1 Cor 1:4–10, 4:7.
- St John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Matthew* 29, trans. G. Prevost, rev. M. B. Riddle, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 1st ser., vol. 10; *Homilies on First Corinthians* 2, 1st ser., vol. 12 (New Advent).
- St Jerome, *Commentarii in Matthaeum* I, on 9:1–2 (Migne, PL 26, cols. 54–55).
- St Ambrose, *Expositio Evangelii secundum Lucam* V.11 (Migne, PL 15).
- St Hilary of Poitiers, *Commentarius in Matthaeum* VIII.8 (Migne, PL 9, cols. 961–962).
- St Thomas Aquinas, *Super Evangelium S. Matthaei lectura* c. 9 (Venice, 1745); *Super I ad Corinthios* c. 1, lect. 1 (Corpus Thomisticum).
- St Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 95, 9, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 1st ser., vol. 8.

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