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## Companions on the Journey

July 18, 2021

Dear Friends in Christ,

I remember a Memorial Mass for a longtime parishioner who died, she was 94 years old. She died old and full of years. She died old and full of life. In listening to the family tell the stories one that stood out was told by the young man who eventually married one of her granddaughters. He was fond of riding motorcycles and enjoyed teasing grandmom that she should go with him sometime. She called his bluff and at the ripe old age of 88 she was tooling around Ambler on his Harley.

Many years back I did a wedding that involved the two oldest people I had ever married. The groom was 89 and the bride was 78. The bride and groom took their honeymoon in Alaska. When they returned to Ambler the 89-year old groom said to me, "Father, if you ever get to Alaska don't miss the helicopter ride over the ice flow. It is spectacular." Amazing.

"Thus says the Lord, Remember not the events of the past. The things of long ago consider not. See, am doing something new." When Isaiah the prophet says this he is referring to the bad things of the past—not the bad stuff that you did, not the bad stuff that was done to you. Don't be anxious about what might happen in the future or what could happen. God does not. God is always in the present. That is the only place that God can be found.

Why is this important? We get the answer from the gospel for today, of the young man who was paralyzed and carried to Jesus by his friends. The paralyzed man is a revelation. As a parish we have had instances where one of our own was in a bad accident and suffered paralysis. Those things do happen. There have been so many parishioners and leaders of the community and just ordinary folk who have responded and helped to share the load. Parishioners join with family to help carry as those four men carried that paralytic. It goes on today.

But as terrible as paralysis of the body is, it pales before the paralysis of the soul. What do I mean? The hurts that have been done to us that we cannot let go, have not let go of. They harden our hearts. Our own sin that we find so difficult to forgive in ourselves makes us more stiff-necked. Our rigidity, our narrow-mindedness, our stubborn inflexibility—all of these are paralyzing us. Our unbending, uncooperative, unforgiving attitudes hold us fast. They paralyze us and they paralyze other people too. Don't live in the past. Don't dwell on the past hurts—either those done to you or those done by you. Don't be afraid to take a risk. Try something new.

Do you really believe that you are forgiven? Jesus looks at you and he looks at me and he sees us as paralyzed souls and he says to us, "Your sins are forgiven." Do you believe that? Do you believe that all the bad stuff you have ever done is not only known but also already forgiven by God? You have only to accept that forgiveness (as you do in the Sacrament). And when we do, it relaxes us a bit, it softens the hard edges and the ingratitude. What have we got to lose? Sometimes you just have to say, "What the heck, I'm getting on the Harley." Sometimes we have to say, "What the heck I'm flying over the glacier." Sometimes we have to say, "What the heck, I'm going to dare to believe that all my sins are forgiven." Sometimes we have to say, "What the heck, I'm going to forgive those people who have hurt me. "I'm going to let them go free." See I am doing something new. Why not? What have we got to lose?

Peace, Msgr. McHenry