

## Homily (5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time) – 2/4/2018

*Every time this gospel passage comes up I get to tell a joke. Actually, it is not a joke . It is a comment made by a professor in the seminary. He was a scholar, a man who rarely smiled. Yet with this passage in the gospel he said something I have never forgotten. It was about Jesus curing Peter's mother-in law. This professor dryly commented on the passage "Even though Jesus cured Peter's mother-in-law, for the remainder of their relationship, Peter and Jesus remained on reasonably good terms."*

*Well, I don't know about you but I needed something to smile about this past week. Our Washington politicians in a dysfunctional congress keep squabbling. I can't recall a time when our country was so polarized. Then again I can. It was fifty years ago. Before most of you were born, you are so young it looks like you are ready to go to the Junior Prom! So let me tell you what it was like living in America not in 2018, but 50 years ago in 1968. It was a time when America felt as if it were undergoing a nervous breakdown. It was a year of sex, drugs and rock and roll. It was a year of anxiety when traditional institutions were under attack, authority challenged and the student slogan "Do not trust anyone over thirty". It was a year when in April 1968 Martin Luther King was assassinated and two months later in June so was Robert Kennedy. It was a year of civil unrest in our cities, rioting by students at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, campus protests against a war and an unpopular President Lyndon Johnson said he would not run again to be president. It was a year when there was discord in the Catholic Church about contraception after the document of Humanae Vitae, and it was a time when thousands of priests and nuns left their convents and church.*

*Yet, something else occurred fifty years ago in the last days of 1968. Something that should give all of us hope as we live through the troubled days of 2018. And I will tell you what that was in the final lines of the homily. But now we have wandered far from the gospel and Jesus healing Peter's mother in law. You know this healing of Peter's Mother-in Law occurs in the privacy of a home. It does not take place in a public setting. It takes place in a family setting. A lot of healing needs to take place in a home, in a family setting doesn't it? For no one needs to be healed so often and so deeply and in so many different ways as does a human being and a lot of that healing needs to take place in a*

*marriage, take place in a family ,take place with the children. For as a family goes so goes our culture, our church, our country. Maybe the dysfunction among members in the congress has its roots in their family.*

*I know of one very prominent member of congress, you see him often on television, a former governor and now a sitting senator who refuses to speak to his brother and has not spoken to him in years. No wonder why some politicians cannot speak civilly to each other.*

*The point is that the need for healing is not just physical. In fact in the time of Jesus a lot of healing was not physical. Their medical knowledge was limited. If people could not understand what was going on with someone it was put down to a demon or evil spirit or a fever. In fact the word fever was an umbrella term for a lot of behavior. They did not stick a thermometer into someone's mouth and read "Uh oh this one has a temperature of 103.2."*

*With Peter's mother in law, Jesus speaks no words. His bedside ministry says nothing about demons. He just gently takes her by the hand and helps her to her feet. We don't have to think of Jesus miracles as acts of dazzling power. In fact, we do not need to see miracles as something done from without. Rather see miracles as unlocking something from within. For certain people Jesus word or touch set free in them the healing power God had placed in them. Still with others it came through another person's intercession.*

*The same holds true for today. Being anointed and prayed over as we plan to do on February 22<sup>nd</sup> at the healing mass can have a similar effect. Celebrating the sacrament of reconciliation, confession, or the Eucharist can too. So too can meditation or fasting have a similar effect.*

*The point is miracles are deep personal encounters of faith. The source of them is always the grace of God. And this brings us to those last days of 1968. Back then our country convulsed through a dark year of one crisis after the other. Yet 50 years ago on Christmas Eve night 1968, two astronauts circled the moon. They radioed back to Houston and over the television airwaves. They opened up a bible to the Book of Genesis and began to read these words to America and to the world: "In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth and darkness covered the abyss.*

*The astronauts reminded a weary divided America that God was still in charge and with them. Fifty years later in 2018, you and I need to be reminded of that too. Especially in those areas where we need personal healing in our families. For as our family goes so goes the culture, as our family goes so goes the church and as our family goes so goes the country.*