Homily for the Monday of the Thirtieth Week of the Year

Jesuit House Chapel
October 30th, 2017

Romans 8:12-17
Psalm 68:2 and 4, 6-7ab, 20-21
Luke 13:10-17

This passage from Luke's gospel is a candidate for one of the most poignant and controversial moments in the clash between the leaders of the faith and Jesus. For Jesus, the framing question is, "What are your priorities?" The moment is fraught with tension and the need to decide; to choose a strict adherence to the Mosaic Law with regard to the prohibition of work - even the work of healing - on the Sabbath or to heal freely, really - a woman, a Daughter of Abraham, our father in faith and therefore our sister in faith, from her decades-long infirmity.

Much could be made of the specific healing of the woman; it's a matter of posture. She cannot straighten up. Physically, psychologically, she is bent over and unable to walk erect with her face and her heart open to her God. How often do we ministers of the gospel encounter such daughters and sons of Abraham?

Who do we know that is analogously bound? The love of God, the very life in the Spirit of God that Paul frames as making us children of God, here requires a human heart, a synchronicity, an analogy, a time-and-space articulation. Feelings dwell in us; but we dwell in love. That is no metaphor, but the actual truth. In helping, healing, in educating, raising-up, saving, love is the responsibility of an I for a Thou. In this lies the likeness of all who love, from the smallest to the greatest. "We do pray for mercy, / And that same prayer doth teach us all to render I the deeds of mercy" (The Merchant of Venice, IV, i, 200-202).