Theme: **Spiritual Vaccination**
**4th Sunday of Lent, 2015**

**Readings: 2 Chron. 36:14-16, 19-23 / Ephesians 2:5-10/ John 3:14-21**

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The discovery of the use of vaccines has helped us a lot. Most of us, since childhood, have been vaccinated several times – e.g. vaccinations against polio, yellow fever, chicken pox, hepatitis. But for such vaccinations, many of us would have been very sick, disabled or even dead by now.

Today, I want to tell you of the good news of the spiritual vaccinations we have received from Jesus Christ! Because of this spiritual vaccination, many of us have been saved from spiritual sickness, disability or death! Praise the Lord!

According to Numbers 21:4-9, as the Israelites were on their journey to the Promised Land, some of them were bitten by snakes. God, then, instructed Moses to make a bronze serpent, and those who beheld it were healed. Jesus used this story to explain how he had come to save mankind from sin and its consequences.Thus, we heard in today’s gospel reading: ‘Just as Moses lifted the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up so that whoever believes might have eternal life in him’ (Jn. 3:14-15).

The story of using a motionless bronze snake to heal the people bitten by snakes is like the process of vaccination. Vaccines are made from the virus or germ that causes the disease (e.g. polio). The virus or germ is taken through a process by which it is weakened or killed, and then used to produce the vaccine, with which one is injected. One’s body then develops immunity against the disease (e.g. polio). So, in the case of those Israelites, one could say that the harmless bronze serpent was like the weakened or killed virus or germ. By faith in God, then, they were vaccinated against snake bites.

Now, sin could be seen as the virus or germ of our suffering and death, for ‘the wages of sin is death’ (Romans 6:23). Fortunately for us, Christ took the ***sin-virus*** and weakened its potency on the cross. Thus, the second reading affirms: ‘even when we were dead in sins, God made us alive through Christ’ (Eph. 2:5). St. Paul reaffirms this: ‘For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to those who are being saved it is the power of God… We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called Jews and Greeks [Africans and Europeans, Asians and Americans], Christ [crucified] is the power and wisdom of God’ to save mankind (1 Cor. 1:18, 23-24).

Furthermore, as the Israelites, by beholding the bronze serpent, had faith in God, so also by faith in Christ crucified, we are vaccinated with the ***vaccine of grace*** against the consequences of sin. Hence, the second reading says: ‘by grace you have been saved through faith’ (Eph. 2:8).

However, you may ask: if we have been vaccinated against suffering and death, why do we still suffer and die? Now, in the normal medical vaccination, the body system may take a while to adjust to the vaccine; sometimes some people even have reactions like fever. Similarly, if we are suffering today, it is like an initial fever, telling us that our souls are adjusting to the spiritual vaccination.

Jesus, the Divine Physician, who has vaccinated us through faith, cannot err. So every bodily sickness or pain or suffering we experience is rather an assurance that our souls are adjusting well and our spiritual immune system is getting stronger and stronger.

I, therefore, pray that every sickness or suffering you and I experience would make our souls healthy for heaven, and that our death will prove that we have been eternally immunized against the fires of Hell! Amen!