

Tuesday's Gospel: A Friend for That Person in Need

Gospel for Tuesday in the 4th Week of Lent, and commentary.

Gospel (*Jn* 5:1-16)

After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, in Hebrew called Bethesda, which has five porticoes. In these lay a multitude of invalids, blind, lame, paralyzed. One man was there, who had been ill for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him and

knew that he had been lying there a long time, he said to him, "Do you want to be healed?" The sick man answered him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is troubled, and while I am going another steps down before me." Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your pallet, and walk." And at once the man was healed, and he took up his pallet and walked.

Now that day was the sabbath. So the Jews said to the man who was cured, "It is the sabbath, it is not lawful for you to carry your pallet." But he answered them, "The man who healed me said to me, 'Take up your pallet, and walk.'"" They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Take up your pallet, and walk'?" Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, as there was a crowd in the place. Afterward, Jesus found him in the temple, and said to

him, “See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse befall you.” The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him. And this was why the Jews persecuted Jesus, because he did this on the sabbath.

Commentary

The pool of Bethsaida was a traditional place of healing. When the waters were agitated, the sick people waiting nearby hurried down to the water, pushing each other as they went, in the hope of being cured of their various afflictions.

There, on a mat, lay a man who had suffered from his affliction for thirty-eight years. Jesus knew the man's story, so he intervened: “Do you want to be healed?” The sick man replied: “Sir, I have no one to put me into the

pool when the water is agitated.” His next statement tells us that, despite being able to move on his own, he never got there soon enough: “while I am going, another steps down before me.” Without help, he was doomed to failure.

This man, in his anonymity, represents all of us, since the person in a state of sin is very weak and has no way of healing himself.

Jesus looks at him with compassion and works a great miracle: “Rise, take up your pallet, and walk.” His healing is instantaneous. And the one who was lying next to the pool not only gets up, but carries the stretcher on which he was lying – a clear symbol of being completely healed. But Jesus warns him: “See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse befall you.”

As Saint Josemaría pointed out, there is a world of sadness in the first

words of that sick man: “*Hominem non habeo* – I have no one to help me. This - unfortunately! – could be said by many who are spiritually sick and paralytic, who could be useful – and should be useful. Lord: may I never remain indifferent to souls (*Furrow*, 212).

Are there sick people among our friends, or in our family? Jesus called us to love our neighbor, and our love needs to be shown in the desire to help those He has placed near us – to be the friend that sick person needs, but doesn't have. We can help them overcome the difficulties they may face. And we can pray for each one, asking Jesus to do what is best for them. If we do all we can to bring them to our Lord, He will do the rest.

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