

Tuesday of the Fourth Week of Lent

Gospel text (Jn 5:1-16): There was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem at the Sheep Gate a pool called in Hebrew Bethesda, with five porticoes. In these lay a large number of ill, blind, lame, and crippled. One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been ill for a long time, he said to him, “Do you want to be well?” The sick man answered him, “Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; while I am on my way, someone else gets down there before me.” Jesus said to him, “Rise, take up your mat, and walk.” Immediately the man became well, took up his mat, and walked.

Now that day was a Sabbath. So the Jews said to the man who was cured, “It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to carry your mat.” He answered them, “The man who made me well told me, ‘Take up your mat and walk.’” They asked him, “Who is the man who told you, ‘Take it up and walk’?” The man who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had slipped away, since there was a crowd there. After this Jesus found him in the temple area and said to him, “Look, you are well; do not sin any more, so that nothing worse may happen to you.” The man went and told the Jews that Jesus was the one who had made him well. Therefore, the Jews began to persecute Jesus because he did this on a Sabbath.

“Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been ill for a long time, he said to him, “Do you want to be well?”

Fr. Àngel CALDAS i Bosch
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Today, Saint John speaks of the parable of the pool of Bethesda. It rather looked like the waiting room of a trauma hospital. “In these lay a large number of ill, blind, lame, and crippled” (Jn 5:3). Jesus went up there.

It's rather curious!: Jesus manages to be found always in the middle of some problem. Wherever He goes, there is always somebody to be “liberated”; there He is when it comes to making people happy. The Pharisees, instead, were concerned only over the fact that it was Saturday. Their bad faith was killing their spirit. Sin's nasty features were showing through their eyes. There's no worse deaf man than he who does not want to hear.

The protagonist of the miracle had been disabled for thirty eight long years. “Do you want to be well?” (Jn 5:6), Jesus says to him. He had since long ago been struggling in the void for he had not found Jesus. At long last, he had found the Man. The five porticoes of the pool of Bethesda boomed out upon hearing the Master's voice: “Rise, take up your mat, and walk.” (Jn 5:8). It was just a matter of an instant.

Jesus Christ's voice is the voice of God. Everything was anew with that old disabled man, spent by dejection. Much later, Saint John Chrysostom will say that in Bethesda pool sick people cured their bodies, while in the Baptism those same sick cure their soul; over there, one only sick could eventually be cured, every now and then. Baptism however, cures always and everybody. In both cases God's power is evidenced through water.

That helpless disabled man, close to the water, does not remind you of our own helplessness to do good? How can we dare solving by ourselves that which has a supernatural scope? Don't you see, every day, around you, a big crowd of disabled ones that are “moving” themselves a lot, while being totally unable to get rid of their lack of freedom? Sin paralyzes man, makes him grow old, kills him... We have to fix our eyes on Jesus. We need Him —His Grace— to plunge us into the waters of prayer, of confession, of the opening of our spirit. You and I may be eternally disabled persons, or, on the contrary, bearers of His light instruments.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

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“Let us be displeased with ourselves when we sin, because sins displeases God. And because we are not in fact without sin, let us at least be like God in this respect, that what displeases him displeases us.” (Saint Augustine)

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“The Church's doors are always open. The Church is Jesus’ house and Jesus welcomes. And if the people are wounded, what does Jesus do? Does He rebuke them for being wounded? No, He comes and carries them on his shoulders. This is called mercy.” (Francis)

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“Jesus performed acts, such as pardoning sins, that manifested him to be the Savior God himself. Certain Jews, who did not recognize God made man, saw in him only a man who made himself God (Jn 10:33), and judged him as a blasphemer.” (Catechism of The Catholic Church, N° 594)