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?”

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Today St. John tells us about the scene at the pool of Bethesda. It looked more like a waiting room in a trauma hospital: There “lay a large number of ill, blind, lame, and crippled” (Jn 5:3). Jesus dropped by.

It’s funny: Jesus is always in the middle of problems. Wherever there is something to “liberate,” to make people happy, He is there. The Pharisees, on the other hand, only thought about whether it was the Sabbath. Their bad faith killed the spirit. The evil slime of sin dripped from their eyes. There is no worse deaf person than the one who does not want to understand.

The protagonist of the miracle had been disabled for thirty-eight years. “Do you want to be well?” (Jn 5:6), Jesus asks him. He had been struggling for some time in the void because he had not found Jesus. At last, he had found the Man. The five porticos of the pool of Bethsaida resounded when the Master's voice was heard: "Rise, take up your mat, and walk" (Jn 5:8). It was only a matter of an instant.

The voice of Christ is the voice of God. Everything was new in that old paralytic, worn out by discouragement. Later, St. John Chrysostom would say that in the pool of Bethsaida the physically ill were cured, and at Baptism the spiritually ill were restored; there, it was from time to time and for only one sick person. In Baptism it is always and for everyone. In both cases the power of God is manifested through water.

The impotent paralytic at the edge of the water, does it not make you think of the experience of your own impotence to do good? How do we intend to resolve, alone, that which has a supernatural impact? Don’t you see every day, around you, a constellation of paralytics who “move” a lot, but who are incapable of moving away from their lack of freedom? Sin paralyzes, ages, kills. We must keep our eyes on Jesus. It is necessary that He—His grace—immerse us in the waters of prayer, of confession, of openness of spirit. You and I can be eternally paralytics, or bearers and instruments of light.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “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)

- “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)

- “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, Nº 594)