



John 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.

Introductory Prayer: Lord Jesus, I look to you with faith, knowing that you are the Lord of all. I hope in your boundless mercy, since without you I can do nothing. I want to love as you deserve, so I come to you in this prayer to console you and bring you the joy of this moment together.

Petition: Lord, help me to be humble of heart so you will heal me.

1. Christ's Power is Stronger: The man in the Gospel was ill for 38 years. His sickness serves as an example of a life of sin. In 1 John 2:16 we read about a triple spiritual sickness: "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life." However, not even a sickness persisting for 38 years is able to escape Jesus' curing power. Christ's power is stronger still. We should therefore take hope, for no sickness, no sin – or life of sin – is too great for him to cure. All that is needed is that we turn to him with a humble and contrite heart: "Lord, I am not worthy, but only say the word and I shall be healed."

2. Revealing Our Weaknesses: Nothing is impossible for Christ. He can heal the sick; he can also forgive their sins, as he forgives the paralytic who is lowered from a rooftop (Cf. Mark 2:1-12). All it takes is for this sick man to reveal his weakness – and he does so with detail, like a true confession: how he has attempted to enter the pool, how as he has tried, someone else has beaten him to it. Perhaps without this detailed account of his failure, he might not have been cured. The sick man’s admitting both his personal weakness and desire to plunge into the pool moves Jesus to compassion. This is the remedy to all of our illnesses: presenting ourselves to Christ as we truly are, with all of our weakness, and thus moving him to compassion.

3. “Go and Sin No More” Jesus says, “Look, you are well, do not sin any more.” It would be a pity if this man, who is deeply moved by Jesus and made whole, afterwards dedicates himself to a life of vice. From the Gospel passage, it would seem that Jesus has cured him in order to allow him to utilize his time and energy for the benefit of the Kingdom: Christ warns the sick man that if he misuses his new health, he could be worse off than before. Hopefully, his healing will produce a conversion and make him a herald of the Kingdom. This happens also in the sacrament of reconciliation: After forgiving our sins, Christ tells us, “Go in peace and proclaim to the world the wonderful works of God who has brought you salvation.”

Conversation with Christ: O Jesus, the only way that I can be like the man at the pool of Bethesda is to be grateful for the gifts you have given me, to fight against a life of sin, and to clothe myself with the “new man.” I am ready to embrace your will with love, even if this means dying to myself.

Resolution: As Easter approaches, I will humbly recognize my sinfulness and seek God’s healing grace in the sacrament of confession.