

Holy Gospel of Jesus Christ according to Saint Gospel Matthew 9:1-8.
After entering a boat, Jesus made the crossing, and came into his own town. And there people brought to him a paralytic lying on a stretcher. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Courage, child, your sins are forgiven." At that, some of the scribes said to themselves, "This man is blaspheming." Jesus knew what they were thinking, and said, "Why do you harbor evil thoughts? Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk?' But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins?" he then said to the paralytic, "Rise, pick up your stretcher, and go home." He rose and went home. When the crowds saw this they were struck with awe and glorified God who had given such authority to men.

Introductory Prayer:
Lord, I come to you in this meditation ready to do whatever it is you ask. Left to myself I often take the easy and convenient path, yet I know the way of a Christian is through the narrow gate. In you I find the reason to abandon the easy path for a more perfect mission of love. I'm ready to learn the meaning of your command: "Follow me."

Petition:
Lord, grant me a deeper experience of your mercy.

1. Crippled by Control:
For St. Jerome, physical paralysis is an image of man's inability to return to God by his own efforts. It is man's inability to create his own salvation, to set the terms by which he can say he has made peace with God. The paralysis is meant to speak more to the Pharisees about their souls than to the cripple who bears it. Christ saw stagnation in the Pharisees' hearts. They wanted to put God in a box, where their relationship with him could neatly accommodate their status and comforts. We, like the Pharisees, like our routine. We like to coast in our spiritual life and dislike having to adjust to God's asking for more faith, trust or charity. For saintly souls, Christ is ever new; they are always being asked for more, and new experiences of Christ fill them as a result. Their love never goes stale since they refuse to control what God can do with them.

2. The Only Real Problem Is Sin:
The paralytic and his companions arrive concerned only about his physical condition.

This is not, however, what is first on Christ's priority list. What is first, rather, is the man's state of soul. For God the problem of life is not about problems. Problems are merely the pretexts he sends us to heal and develop our relationship with him: "Your sins are forgiven." The problem of life is all about holiness and about removing the chief obstacle to holiness: sin. Deep down, the only things that can hurt us are the obstacles of sin and an egoistic lifestyle.

3. Awaiting God's Replies:
The pause between "Courage, child, your sins are forgiven you" and the cure of the paralysis initially may have caused disappointment in those unfamiliar with Christ's way of working. In that wait our response to God comes, and our part in the plan of salvation is played out. Instant gratification of a child's wants spoils the meaning of his parents' gift of loving support. To arrive to Christian maturity, we must form the virtues of faith and trust. Seeking cures must be sought more as part of God's will than as our own self-centered relief effort. This takes time. Yet even in that pause, in the dark night of faith, something is happening. While miracles are on the way, we are being changed. The command to rise seems only to confirm or make visible something that has already occurred in the paralytic's soul: through faith and trust, Christ reigns over his soul.

Conversation with Christ:
Lord, I know that in you alone I shall rise, because only you can conquer sin in me. For my part, like St. Paul, I have sought to fight the good fight, strengthened by your grace and mercy. Help me to accept every difficulty as a new chance to purify my heart and sanctify my soul.

Resolution:
Today I will remember to avoid rash and judgmental thoughts of others. As I do so I will keep in my heart the merciful dispositions of Christ's heart.