

March 24, 2020
Tuesday of the Fourth Week of Lent

Activity for today:

- Answer yesterday's questions
- Read Fr. Brian's Gospel Reflection
- Pray the Daily Prayer
- Check out the Daily Activity
- Complete the Pray Task

Reflection upon Daily Gospel Reading John 5:1-16

Jesus faces a dilemma: A man has been suffering from a handicapping illness for 38 years (probably some crippling paralysis-since he can't get into the healing pool at the right time when the waters stir). The man has been laying around the healing pool, waiting for just the right moment to be cured of his illness. This special pool called 'Bethesda' by the Sheep Gate of the Temple was like a pilgrimage site in this biblical time of Jesus where many people gathered, similar to Lourdes, France and the healing shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes today. The man may have 'almost' been healed many times, rushing to get into the water as it began to stir, only to have it stop flowing the minute he got to the pool's edge!

In 38 years, I bet that happened a lot. But the man never gave up. He kept at it and stayed by the pool. Then one day the man met the true source of healing, Jesus Himself. But guess what? According to the Pharisee authorities, Jesus can't heal today because it the Sabbath. No one can do work on the Sabbath, and healing is a doctor's skill, so that would be 'working'. Even after 38 years of patient attempts at being cured, the man finally comes upon the real doctor in Jesus Himself, and the Pharisees would say 'Sorry, you have to come back tomorrow for this life-changing encounter with your healing Savior, because this the Sabbath'!

Thank God (of course Him) that Jesus doesn't receive His prescription pad from the Pharisees. What does He do? Jesus heals him-always! If we fast forward in the story a little, we hear about an even more personal detail that shows how wonderful a Savior we have. In verse 14, it says that Jesus sought the man out after the whole public event, away from the crowd later, to engage in a little doctor's follow-up session. Of course, Jesus made it more personal by giving His name and talking with the man about what to keep doing to remain faithful and well (soul & body!). We could wish that the Pharisee Temple Authorities could have lightened up their nitpicking about the Sabbath small print rules (I imagine what additionally upset the Temple Bosses was that Jesus wasn't a 'network' healer in the Temple and so his services weren't taxed by them and he didn't pay their group practice bribes-They will charge Jesus with Sabbath violations, because he also ordered the man to 'carry home his mat'-which was a work effort of hauling a load on sabbath). But Jesus does not take orders from the Pharisees. No, He came to do the Will of the Father, which He says in verse 17 about 'working in union with the Father'.

Jesus reveals that the true rest of the Sabbath was to be about the service and glory of the Father, not gaining some privilege for oneself. The Pharisees had themselves manipulated the Sabbath and Sabbath laws to serve their own power-interests and self-enrichment. So Jesus

doesn't hesitate to upset their petty control and continue His Saving ministry, healing and reconciling any-everyone open to accepting His grace.

Elsewhere in the gospel of Mark, Jesus puts the Sabbath law into proper perspective as God-given for the true benefit of humanity when he taught in Mark 2:27-28 "The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath. That is why the Son of Man is Lord even of the sabbath." The Sabbath rest and all of its observances are meant to heal and give God's peace to us. Such true Sabbath healing and renewal sounds like the real work of the Father.

Prayer for the Day:
Prayer Peace and Trust in God

Heavenly Father, You alone give my heart rest and my mind peace. I give this day to you. You are Faithful. As you always keep me in mind, so help me keep you in mind all day. May your healing presence bring peace to any anxiety that may creep up in me this day. May I serve you and your will in all that I do. May your guiding word be heard in all that I say. May I share generously your grace with everyone I see and hear today. May your will be done, and your kingdom come in all of my actions. Teach me how to keep Sabbath time in every moment and every day. I ask all of this in the name of Jesus the Lord. Amen

Activity for the Day:

Make a list of activities you usually perform on Sundays. Are they good and restful works that benefit others and glorify God?

Prayer Task for Today:

Pray for someone who is out of work now or not able to work because of shutdowns. Pray for God to give them peace and open a new avenue of activity for them.