

Daily Homily

Tuesday, Fourth Week of Lent

24 March 2020

On the Gospel: John 5: 1-6 (usccb daily readings)

Since midnight we have been ordered to “stay home.” All nonessential work needs to cease in its normal capacity. All nonessential travel is a no-no. We do this to curtail the spread of an invisible enemy. We have been told, “We are at war.” This is not business as usual. During past wartime all sorts of sacrifices had to be made, all sorts of inconveniences were state-ordered imposed: lights out at a certain hour, aluminum drives, rubber drives and food rations. That was out of the ordinary living, but even more – the draft. Individuals were taken away from the comfort of home and placed at the service of country and usually into harm’s ways. In the midst of that, life had to go on, family had to be tended to, school had to happen, work needed to be accomplished, plans had to be fulfilled. It must have been a balancing act of out of the ordinary living and trying to find some semblance of normalcy.

At the Sheep Gate there was a man. He was not so much “sheltered in place” but he was sheltered in another way, in sickness. A long time too, not just till April 6, but for thirty-eight years. He was so sheltered that no one even saw him. He tried to get down to the pool to wash, to ease his disease, to find a bit of solace and comfort, but no one saw him. He was confined and quarantined behind closed doors and windows and all walled up in his house of illness. What a sad image, everyone goes ahead of him to the pool, and he is always left behind.

Jesus is all about the “first will be last and the last will be first.” Jesus sees this “last” man, this left behind person. Jesus noticed. Jesus saw. Jesus recognized the need. Not with touch – just like our days of physical distancing – but with words, Jesus speaks to his need. He speaks on him words that descend over his sickened body as healing balm that is strength for his legs, security for his knees, and makes his feet steady and sure. He walks.

Behind our walls and behind our closed doors, in our semi-confinement, in this war time, in this time of inconvenience and even sacrifice, when we may sometimes feel last, least, and left behind, Jesus notices. He sees you. He recognizes the need. He speaks again into our times and on this day to you. Take some time today with him. Don’t fill this day with other busyness to pass the time. Take some time with him today. What words do you hear him say? What words does he speak from his lips to your ears, from his heart to your heart? What words descend on you like healing ointment giving you the strength, security, and steadiness that you need?

He won’t leave you behind.