Diving Into The Mercy Of God

Our recent Gospel readings tell us about healings that Jesus performed to those who were hopeless and had no chance to get better. However, Jesus showed that behind the miracle of physical healing was another one, equally important or maybe even more so. It is the miracle of His mercy.

Our Lord didn’t come into the world as a physician for the body. He came to spiritually save us. He came to offer us total freedom from sin and its consequences. What are these consequences? To answer this, we must recall the very first sin. We all remember Adam and Eve (not personally, of course); they ate from the forbidden tree in the Garden of Eden. From that moment men began to trust in themselves more than they trusted in God. Immediately Adam and Eve realized they were naked and became fearful. They were ashamed of their naked bodies. They felt guilt for what they had done. Although guilt, shame, and fear are three consequences of sin, the greater cost was eternal separation from God.

Jesus In Jerusalem

The Gospel reading today doesn’t give us any explanation of why Jesus was in Jerusalem. Only that He
decided to attend a feast and apparently, He was alone. Somehow this doesn’t fit our understanding of Jesus – His life was to spread the Good News, to reveal His Father’s truth. It is difficult to do this if He was alone as the Gospel story tells us.

And here our incredible story begins. Jesus was always found in places where He could find those who were in need. In today’s story He went to a famous place in Jerusalem – the pool of Bethesda. Translated, it was the House of Mercy or House of the Olive. [The meaning of the name is significant, as we know the oil of the sick is made from the olive fruit.] It was a very religious place where crowds of people gathered to be healed by the water that would bubble up from the pool. For many it was the place where they could find mercy, but for others it was a house of misery. They would all wait around the pool for the moment when the water would bubble up. The first one who jumped in was healed, leaving others in despair.

The man that Jesus approached was one of the ill. St. John tells us that Jesus knew how long this man was waiting there, having no one to help him. Jesus asked him a very simple question that should have had a
simple answer, “Do you want to be healed?” The answer from a sick person should be emphatically, “Yes!”

I Have No Man!

But the Gospel tells us that “Yes!” was not the answer the man gave. Instead, (paraphrasing) he said, “I have no man to help and someone else always gets in first.” This statement indicates that his faith was limited – that he was bound by what he knew about God healing power. His entire faith depended upon the hands of man to help him change his life. What a tragedy! He tries to find the solution to his own illness in man, who lacks the ability to cure him. Yet the Prophet Jeremiah says, *Cursed is the man who trusts in human beings, who seeks his strength in the flesh, whose heart turns away from the LORD.* (Jr 17:5)

So the essence of his illness was wrapped up in three things: the inability of man to help him, the loss of his own identity, and his loneliness. Unfortunately, these things are far too common in our world. Many can say, *I don’t have anyone to help me; there is no one to tend to my needs; I do not matter to anyone else; or my family doesn’t want me.*
Find Solace In The Depth Of His Mercy

But the solution came to this sick man. Jesus, who is both God and man, came to him. In the House of Mercy, the man witnesses the Face of Mercy – Jesus himself. So please, I’m asking you – especially in this time when you feel disappointed by things beyond your control or feel your trust in God is broken – don’t allow these feelings to keep you from the miracle that Jesus brings to you. Don’t be afraid to throw yourself into His arms, to dive into the depth of His mercy for healing.