

**Passivity as Sin**    Fourth Week of Lent    Tuesday, April 2, 2019    Ez 47:1-9, 12;    **Jn 5:1-16**    (St. Francis of Paola, hermit)    (He is really another Judas, betraying the very one who helped him, gratuitously. So something worse did happen to him.)

**“Do you want to be well?”**

This is a rather strange question, actually. You may think it’s obvious, but it’s strange. First of all, there are very rare occurrences where Jesus takes any initiative in healing someone. Ordinarily people pursued him; they came to him with requests, with the sick, with the dead. **But here this man doesn’t ask for anything. He is just sitting passively;** that is not actually a good sign. Not only that, how long has he been there? Thirty-eight years. Well that may sound like a long time, which it is, but not long enough. Forty years would be long enough. **Forty years would be perfection. He is lacking in something.** Is he lacking in faith? He says, well “While I am on my way, someone else gets down there before me.” So what, really so what? Apparently he is also superstitious. He seems to think that if he is not the first one to enter the water when it’s churning, then he is not going to be healed. **So apparently he has very little faith or maybe no faith, just superstition. And he is rather passive and blah.**

For some reason, which we cannot figure, **Jesus decides to ask him this question: “Do you want to be well?” And he proceeds to heal him on a sabbath.** Is Jesus deliberately trying to provoke the religious authorities? I don’t know, maybe. But we see **this man, who is so ignorant, he doesn’t even know who Jesus is,** even though by all accounts Jesus was well-known, well-known in Jerusalem, well-known around the temple. But this guy doesn’t have any clue. So that tells you another thing about him.

So then the Jews say, “Well, you can’t do what you are doing; it’s forbidden on the sabbath to carry that mat.” And he says, “Well, I’m only doing what I was told to do.” And he is asked, “By whom?” He says, “I don’t know, the man who cured me.” “Who was it?” “I don’t know.” Then later Jesus sees him again, and he says something very interesting. He says. **“Look, you are well; do not sin any more, so that nothing worse may happen to you.”** In other words, **this life of indifference, you might say ignorance, passivity, that’s actually sin.** So he says, “Don’t stay this way, or something worse will happen to you,” which it did, because now he goes and he tells the Jews; he reports to them. So **he is really another Judas, betraying the very one who helped him, gratuitously. So something worse did happen to him.** “Therefore, the Jews began to persecute Jesus because he did this on a sabbath.”