

Jesus tells us to stand up and walk
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What do you think? Do people here in the United States and other parts of the world invest too much money in their health? Look at your health insurance bill; that will be enough to tell you.

But it is normal to take care of our health. We want to be healthy. We have, written into our DNA, the instinct of self-preservation; we want to be alive.

So, too, does the paralytic man desire to be healthy, hungering for life (Jn 5:1-15). He spent 38 years in one public place, waiting for some miracle. This was his only hope: that someone would carry him to the healing water.

This poor man waited 24 hours a day for help, but who could provide this service? Perhaps there were some rich people who had someone put them in the water, and others had no chance, for they were poor.

Jesus asks the paralytic man a simple question: Do you want to be healthy? The paralytic man does not answer, "Yes." Instead, he responds with an argument, "I have no one to put me in."

This is a common problem: God proposes a solution, but we have our own idea about how it should be. Jesus offers us the way to health, but we have our own expectations and ideas for help. We don't need God's, certainly not those of the church!

Today, Jesus comes to you as the Word of God to ask you: Do you want to be healthy? What does it mean to ask this?

Jesus' remedy in this Gospel passage is connected with water, that is with baptism. We are here as Christians because we believe that Jesus Christ died and was raised up, and gives us new life in him and through him in baptism. Here, we receive eternal life, without health insurance and Social Security. In heaven, we will have no need for these solutions.

What does it mean to "get up"? In Greek, the word for "stand up" is the same word for resurrection. The word Jesus speaks to the sick man is the same word the angel proclaims at the empty tomb.

Jesus has the power to say to everyone, "Stand up." He tells us to pick up our mats and to walk, but where? Toward the heavenly kingdom. We have our direction; we have our home in heaven. Do not forget it.

As a result, our faith in Jesus Christ must fill us up with joy. The paralytic man did not have hope for his life. He thought he would die there on a sleeping mat, with no one to help him.

How many people in this world are hopeless? Why? Because they do not have Jesus Christ in their hearts.

We need to go forth to proclaim Jesus Christ to our neighbors and families, that Christ is risen!

We must not worry that we are small. It is important to have Jesus Christ in our heart.

If you have Jesus in your heart, people will ask you, "Where did you get your joy?" In this way, we can bring more people to encounter him.

Christ is risen! Indeed, he is risen!

This Voice of the Shepherd is based on a homily Bishop Milan Lach, SJ, gave during Divine Liturgy at St. Michael the Archangel Parish in Oregon, Ohio, April 22, on the Sunday of the Paralytic Man.

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