

Tuesday of the Fourth Week of Lent

“Do you want to be well?” The Lord’s question to the sick man is the question he asks each of us. Our answer should be clear and without hesitation, yet the enemy, always lurking, loves to lure us into despair. The sick man feels trapped in his condition, for all his previous efforts to be cured have failed. We, too, can experience this with our own sins, believing them insurmountable and condemning ourselves to spiritual torpor. But the Lord’s word cuts to the quick: “Rise, take up your mat, and walk.” The grace of Jesus is a refreshing water that gives life and growth to our souls; “they are watered by the flow from the sanctuary.”

Stirred

The waters stir and I lie paralyzed
as crowds of cure-seekers jump, roll, dive
into the angel’s invisible arms.
She rocks them in the waves of the pool.
For thirty-eight years I overhear
the sick being made whole,
and sigh that I haven’t a friend
to push me to the edge
when the waters wake and call
till a stranger’s voice breaks in:
“Do you want to be well?”
“Without a friend, it’s a race I can’t win.”
He lifts my head; his eyes deep pools
that stir the sediment of my will.
More than all pity, I want to be well.
“Take up your mat and walk,” he says.
I take his hand. His grip—my God!
For the first time in decades, I stand.
I gather my bed from Bethesda’s edge
and step to his steady command.

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