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4 Tuesday

TUESDAY, Week 4 of Lent

Ezechiel 47: 1-9, 12

Ps 45: 2-3, 5-6, 8-9

John 5: 1 - 16

People who were blind, lame or paralysed seem to have been the special objects of Jesus' physical healing miracles. They were also the people that the Old Testament prophets said the Messiah would heal. There are, indeed, other illnesses the gospels tell us Jesus cured. But today's gospel reading (John 5) rather unusually doesn't say what illness that man at the Sheep Gate in Jerusalem was suffering from. It really doesn't matter, of course. What's important is that Jesus singled him out from among all the other invalids there, and healed him. And the fact that this happened on the sabbath day. Jesus showed His compassion in recognising that this man had been lying there for a long time (ill for 38 years, longer than any of the many others there ?). But He also challenged the man by asking him did he really want to be made well. For his being healed would clearly not depend on someone moving him to the pool at the right time, but on his deep desire for God, and his trust that this stranger before him (he didn't recognise Jesus yet) had power to heal. But Jesus also seemed to be deliberately provoking the authorities by so openly healing the man on the sabbath and telling him to take his mat and walk away. And, sure enough, they took this opportunity to start persecuting Jesus. What angered the authorities wasn't Jesus' evident extraordinary power to heal, but that He used it on the sabbath day! They didn't see that that sabbath truly was the Day of the Lord, a day of praise, joy and thanksgiving.

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