Spirituality
Pencil Preaching



by Pat Marrin

View Author Profile
patrickjmarrin@gmail.com.

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“I have no one to put me in the pool” (John 5: 3).

Ez 47:1-9, 12; *Jn 5:1-16*

Today’s readings pair Ezekiel’s wonderful description of the bountiful waters flowing from the temple foundations (Ezek 47) with the story of Jesus’ healing of the man at the pool of Bethesda.

The life-giving power of water continues for us in Lent, when our journey in the desert is refreshed by Jesus, who is the source of Living Waters celebrated in the Gospel stories of the healing of the blind man who washes in the Pool of Siloam and the Samaritan woman at the well.

As water gives life and restores life, so Jesus is the wellspring of God's grace and the means by which we are cleansed of sin and baptized into new life.

The many miracles from the synoptic gospels taken up in the fourth Gospel as "signs" are rich in details and allusions to other scripture passages. Each sign culminates in an "I am" saying that reveals Jesus as the divine I AM, the name revealed to Moses from the burning bush.

One small detail is the length of time the crippled man has been stationed at the pool hoping to be healed—a total of 38 years, virtually his entire life, yet he had never been healed.

The time is close to the symbolic 40 years the Hebrews spent wandering in the desert with Moses. For their faithlessness, a whole generation had perished before the people finally reached the Promised Land. This time of testing, which was also like the 40 days of Jesus' time in the wilderness (and the duration of our Lent), is the long prelude to trusting in the life only God can give.

The sick man is incapable of saving himself. When Jesus arrives, he is quickly healed and told to pick up his mat (and his life) and walk.

We are invited to absorb these readings by easing ourselves into the living waters, the bath of regeneration and refreshment that makes our journey possible. In the final weeks of Lent we must pick up our lives and walk, for Jerusalem lies ahead, where everything we believe in is about to happen.