

April 1, 2025

# Daily Reflections

## Journeying through Lent



Center for Spiritual Development

### GETTING UNSTUCK

By Robert Choiniere

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#### An Excerpt from Today's Gospel

*Now there is in Jerusalem at the Sheep Gate  
a pool called in Hebrew Bethesda, with five porticoes.  
In these lay a large number of ill, blind, lame, and crippled.  
One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years.  
When Jesus saw him lying there  
and knew that he had been ill for a long time, he said to him,  
"Do you want to be well?"  
The sick man answered him,  
"Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool  
when the water is stirred up;  
while I am on my way, someone else gets down there before me."  
Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your mat, and walk."  
Immediately the man became well, took up his mat, and walked.*

**JOHN 5:2-9**

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## Reflection

As far back as the Roman empire there has been traffic. Every day scores of people traveled over the same routes to go to market or to work and back home. The constant flow of chariot wheels created grooves in the stone road that you can still see today at Roman archeological sites. In the late 1800s this same phenomenon occurred with covered wagons in American cities. Americans called it getting “stuck in a rut,” and it soon took on a much wider meaning. Getting stuck in a rut can mean a monotonous routine or simply burnout. It is the inability to imagine yourself outside of the boundaries where you have placed yourself, or where you have been placed by society or your situation. It can happen to any of us. We become defined by the limitations of our infirmities, our social status or our past choices. The ruts we get stuck in can begin to define our entire life. The contours of the rut become like blinders, making it only possible to see the narrow situation we are in and not the potential or possibilities beyond.

The sick man that Jesus meets at the pool of Bethesda is in a very deep rut, a 38-year-old rut, we are told. Jesus asked him, “Do you want to be well?” meaning, “Do you want to get out of this rut?” The man relates the same tapes he has played out for decades. He laments all that prevents him or hinders him, what defines his every day. Jesus is having none of it. He doesn’t even engage this narrative. Instead, He says to the man, “You don’t need to live in this rut. Just stop, now. Don’t waste another moment trapped in this mindset, in this rut.” This is the power of transformation, the healing power of Jesus to raise us out of our long suffering to do what we never thought possible when trapped in our rut.

The story continues, making another important point. The Gospel calls out misguided religious tradition that has lost its tether to the God that it is called to embody and represent. The primary work of God is to heal, to remove impediments, to restore, to liberate and free. The religious authorities here have lost their focus and cannot recognize the work of God right in front of them, stuck in the rules of their own myopic rut. The Gospel today is a great challenge and corrective, calling us to keep our eye on the ball, on the healing power of God breaking into our world and into our lives -- calling us out of our ruts, both personal and institutional, freeing us from long suffering and the tapes that play in our minds over and over again ... trying to convince us that we are somehow stuck, unable to live free. Jesus’ healing power can get us unstuck, but first we must answer Jesus’ question: Do you want to be well?

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Ruts in the Road

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## For Pondering

- What are or have been the ruts in your life?
  - How is Jesus' unsticking power both a comfort and a challenge?
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## For Prayer

*Dear God,  
I feel stuck, unsure of the path ahead.  
I am seeking your guidance and strength to move forward.  
Help me to release the doubts and anxieties that hold me back,  
and to trust in your plan for my life.  
Grant me the courage to step out of my comfort zone  
and embrace the unknown.  
May your light illuminate my path,  
and your love empower me to overcome any obstacles.  
Amen.*

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