

YOU WERE ASKING . . . by Msgr. Pat Stilla

Q. When Jesus is asked in the Gospel to heal the sick, they are healed instantly. Why has this pandemic not disappeared immediately despite all our prayers to God to rid our world of it?

A. Prayer is communication with God and reflection on the state of our relationship with Him. Some, however may consider it to be a sure way of calling upon God to immediately grant their every wish, like the summoning a 'genie from a bottle' or 'from an Arabian lamp'.

Did Jesus not heal instantly?

Yes, at times He did heal instantly but at other

times the healings were gradual and relied on the actions of the one who was ill. For instance, among the immediate healings recorded in the Gospels, we read about Jesus healing a leper

(*Matthew 8: 1-3*) and then, curing Peter's mother-in-law who was ill with a fever (*Matthew 8: 14-15 or Mark 1: 29-31*). Later, when asked to do so, He instantly healed a centurion's servant (*Luke 7:1-10*) and a paralytic (*Mark 2:1-12 and Luke 5:18-26*). He even raised His friend Lazarus from the dead to comfort Martha and Mary who were distraught with their brother's sudden death (*John 11:1-44*).

Some healings were gradual

At other times, the healings were gradual. One such time is when He healed a blind man, as recorded in Mark's Gospel (8:22-25). We read:

"Some people brought a blind man to him ...

Jesus laid his hands on him and asked,

"Can you see anything?"

The man looked up and said,

"I can see people,

but they look like trees, walking."

Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and the blind man looked intently and his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly".

Effort was sometimes required

The Gospels tell us of other events when the healing is not only gradual but when its efficacy depends on the effort of those who are healed. In John's Gospel (9: 7), after Jesus touched the blind man, He commanded him to, "Go, and wash in the pool of Siloam". Only after he "went and washed, did he return able to see". The same

is true of the ten lepers who were asked to "Go and show themselves to the Priests". Then, "as they went, they were made clean" (*Luke 17:12-14*).

Sometimes, no healing at all!

Although this last example does not mention Jesus, it does speak of fervent prayer to God for healing made by a

man of Faith, but which produced no results at all.

The man was St. Paul. In his second letter to the Corinthians, (12:7-9), he says that he was experiencing something painful in his life, which he called his "thorn in the flesh". He had asked God many times to

take it away from him but, to his amazement, God did not! He finally concluded in retrospect, that this 'thorn' was actually a saving grace that taught him some humility. It reminded him that, despite his many accomplishments, even he was, after all, still human and imperfect. Perhaps our current pandemic "thorn" may serve our world in a similar way. Despite the world's habitual hubris flowing from its many modern accomplishments, it is brought to its knees by this tiny virus and reminded that we are still only human and imperfect and that we must humbly rely on God's inspiration and on each other to survive!

