

Day 04 of the Novena Healing at the Pool

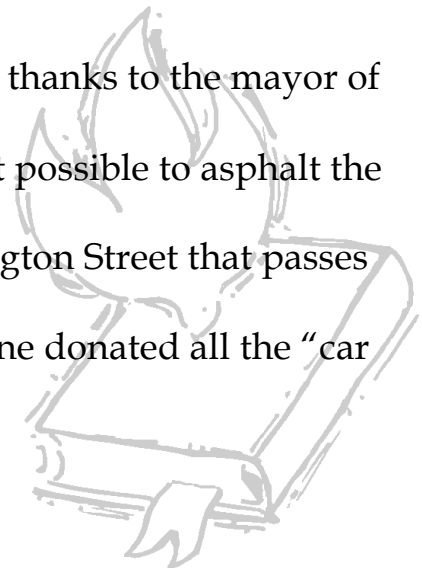
Rev. Peter G. Jankowski
July 20, 2026

Ez 47: 1-9, 12
Psalm 46: 2-3, 5-6, 8-9
Jn 5: 1-16



As we have mentioned, at St. Patrick's Church where we celebrate this particular Online Liturgy, we just upgraded our parking lot, the first time this has been done since the building was dedicated in 1917. We're trying to upgrade our parking lot first time in history. We've ever put asphalt down to clean it up and make it look nice.

Thanks to a two-time Superbowl Winner from the Pittsburgh Steelers who lives in Momence named Ted Peterson, thanks to the Chief of Police in Momence named Patrick Simpson and thanks to the mayor of the city, Charles Steele, all three of them made it possible to asphalt the entire alleyway from Second Avenue to Washington Street that passes behind our church building. In addition, someone donated all the "car



stops” that line the perimeter of our lots as well. Even one of our neighbors utilized the asphalt company (since they were on site) to have their own driveway paved; the other neighbor to our property happened to be a councilman in the city – who is going to refuse us paving the alleyway for free?

In addition, the city gave us permission to pull up a crumbling sidewalk on the property as well and asphalt that area so that the parking lot and alleyways could be safe and nice for those in the area. As a result, we upgraded and beautified the property so that we can make it a worthy place of prayer and devotion.

While we were finishing this project, our asphalt specialist said to us that the parking lot had a lot of ebbs and flows, that every time it rained on the property he could notice the “sins” of the parking lot that held pockets of water so that he could slope the lot to relieve us of the water. As a result, our specialist was trying to provide a type of “drainage” on the property to prevent water from sitting inside our parking area and thus corrupting our lot in the process; our specialist intentionally sloped the lot so that the “high point” of the lot was right at its center.

We came to find out that instead of taking gravel out of the lot to slope it, our specialist had to bring gravel *in*, to add more gravel to the lot to pack in the pockets that were holding water. Our specialist wanted to make sure that the lot was sloped correctly so that we do right by the parish.

In the scriptures, we learn how the image of water becomes a symbol of death as well as a symbol of life, as we came to find out in our parking lot. Water can become a symbol of nourishment, and in this case, a symbol to reveal the sins of where our potholes and bad spots were hiding on our property. Water is a symbol of life and a symbol of death, as was revealed in our parking lot project these last few weeks.

We also learned that at one time, St. Anne had a paved parking lot but, due to negligence and bad caretaking, the water spots and weeds slipped through the lot and corrupted it beyond repair. When we inspected the lot at St. Anne's, one of our St. Anne parishioners named Jackie Bruhn revealed the history of this lot and asked what we could do to renovate it.

Jackie's family has had quite a history in our area. Jackie's mother, Marcia Tedford, attended the daily Mass at St. Patrick's. Before she died earlier this year, Marcia's routine was to come to the parish early, spend time with her friends in the pews, pray at Mass, have breakfast at a local restaurant and then return home to spend the rest of each day. This was Marcia's routine during her retirement.

Before Marcia died, she kept asking me if anyone would remember her or if her memory would be washed out like the rain (her words). I thought about this when, on Easter Vigil morning, a few parishioners from our Hispanic community asked where Marcia was buried so they could visit her. The water that also represented death came to life on the Easter Vigil morning – the woman of the community wanted to join them and bless Marcia's grave with the same holy water used to bless Easter baskets that weekend.

What Marcia did not realize was that she was *not* forgotten – where she thought her memory would be kept alive by a group of faithful many in our community did not know would remember her, a group from the parish who supported and loved this woman.

Through these stories, daughter Jackie came to realize how much mother Marcia was loved, and Jackie, following her mother's example, wanted to have the same kind of parking lot over at St. Anne's as Marcia wished would take place at St. Patrick's.

So we created a parking lot worn down by the water stains of life; we try to figure out how to restore another parking lot beaten down by the water. Jackie said to me, "Wouldn't it be nice if on St. Anne's Day, we could have that parking lot upgraded?" So we will try to raise \$60,000 before St. Anne's Day to repair our parking lot, which probably will not happen but we will try to do what we can. Whatever you can do to help would be most appreciative.

With this homily, we learn that God can bring us life like water can bring us life. God also can bring us death as was the case of the flood during the time of Noah. We learned that after the Noah story in Genesis, God promised never to destroy with water again but now the rest is up to us, whether we choose to allow water to give us life or death. Whether it be Marcia Tedford, Jackie Bruhn, you or me, we are putting our faith in God. putting our faith in Christ to make the

impossible possible, if we have faith – faith is the prerequisite of a miracle and, even if the earthly miracle does not take place, the heavenly one is guaranteed to those who believe.

We learn in today's story that Jesus is the well, that Jesus is the flowing water. If we turn to Jesus and his Father, the Spirit will give us what we need to make it to the other side. Jesus Christ is the living water, regardless of what early pool exists in our lives. Jesus Christ *is* the living water; Jesus Christ *is* the bread of salvation. In a sense (as our crippled friend in today's gospel learned), Jesus can make the impossible possible.

What I love about this paralytic story we just read today was that with Jesus, the paralytic did not need to be dipped into the flowing water – he just needed faith in God. I had a chance to visit this pool in Bethesda... *twice*. I have celebrated Mass on that spot where this paralytic was healed. He learned, as we learn, that Jesus *was* the sheep gate; Jesus *was* the living water. Where Ezekiel encountered the living water in exile even though so many people of his time did not have faith, Ezekiel encountered the water flowing east, the rising of the sun,

to realize that a new day would dawn, and that water would lead us to the new day.

We realize in today's gospel that Christ will lead us to the new day, if we have faith. For us, we realize that with faith, all things are possible. Concerning this story of the paralytic, the one rendering of this paralytic story to which I really am attached is the one in the Gospel of Mark (2: 1-12). In this telling of the paralytic story, the faith did not come from the one who was ill but rather the four men who lowered the paralytic down from the roof. When Jesus saw the faith of these men, he then healed the paralytic. We learn in John's rendering of the story, the faith came from the paralytic himself.

The challenge for us today is that so many people lack faith; to these stories we encounter "naysayers" in the world who are just like the Sadducees and Pharisees of the First Century. Instead of focusing on whatever is good, they naysayers then and now focused on the fact that Jesus, God, performed a miracle on the Sabbath.

I kind of laugh at the story since today, most *everyone* of faith break the Sabbath in one way or another – this is the problem when we *lack*

faith. Imagine if we spent that Sabbath day with God in preparation for what is yet to come, to focus on the one who created us and on the one who will bring us home. If we did that, imagine what would happen on the other side of life.

One of the reasons I love going to the Poor Clares in Minooka, IL is that they radically live this life in preparation for what is yet to come. The Poor Clare Sisters constantly invest in the spiritual devotions of the Church, all of the Novenas and prayers of the faith. As a response to these prayers, the good sisters have been helping out our parishes with constant donations of food and furniture. The sisters introduced me to Nick Scopna, who helped find someone to repair St. Patrick's roof at a ridiculously cheap price, helped find someone who created bathrooms on the first floor of the gym and Nick keeps bringing food every single week for the hungry and the needy of our area. The sisters also took custody of our St. Anne Relic (instead of putting it in a safety deposit box in the bank) to pray for the souls of St. Anne's and those who attend our Novenas and all of your intentions as well.

You are not forgotten; the sisters keep praying for you and loving you in God's name every day. For the sisters, the waters of salvation are so important that they bless themselves in front of the relic every time that pray.

Jesus is the living water. Jesus is the bread of life. Jesus is the chalice of salvation. And if we hold on to Christ, and all of this makes sense. Yes, we will have to deal with modern-day naysayers, the metaphorical Sadducees and the Pharisees of today's age, who will dismiss us and go after us because they do not believe or choose to believe.

We need to remember that Jesus is the living water; Jesus is our life. We need to persevere, with prayer, with study, with service, and with Christian charity, faith, hope, and charity and sacrifice our lives to bring this living water to the people of faith, to being selfless for the sake of the other person.

We are so thankful for all of you who "get" what we are trying to do with these Novena Masses. Please just continue to do what you can. Pray for us, support us. However you can, if you can do the financial donations, that would be spectacular, because we need the help to take

this tradition of the St. Anne Novena and carry it into the next generation and beyond.

God bless all of you. We invite you to come to the living water, come to Christ. We, as a community, continue to pray for you and love you in God's name. We will do whatever we can for you, as well as people that we meet. This is our prayer.