

The Magic 8 Ball is a toy currently manufactured by Mattel Company. The original Magic 8 Ball was built for Brunswick Billiards company back in 1950.

These days, there are all sorts of variants of the Magic 8 Ball - one based on the TV series Glee ... another based on the Toy Story animated movies ... there's a Barbie version, a Spongebob version, and even a Disney princess version.

The classic version of a Magic 8 Ball has a 20-sided device that floats. 10 of the sides have responses that are positive: It is certain; It is decidedly so; Without a doubt; Yes – definitely; You may rely on it; As I see it, yes; Most likely; Outlook good; Signs point to yes; and Yes.

5 sides have non-committal responses: Reply hazy, try again; Ask again later; Better not tell you now; Cannot predict now; and Concentrate and ask again.

And the remaining 5 sides have negative responses: Don't count on it; My reply is no; My sources say no; Outlook not so good; and Very doubtful.

I would guess that most of us have at least seen a Magic 8 Ball, many of us may have owned one, or at least played with one. And while it is a cute novelty, I certainly hope that none of us have based serious decisions on the answers received from a Magic 8 Ball.

In today's Gospel, we hear the familiar story of the paralytic whom Jesus cures. But this isn't a common situation. Jesus was crowded around with so many people, that the friends of the paralytic go to extreme measures to get to Jesus - they climb onto the roof of the house where Jesus is, break a hole in the roof, and lower their friend down to Jesus.

Jesus, in turn, recognizes their radical faith, and forgives the man's sins. Which raises the ire of the officials present who criticize Jesus for taking on the power of God. Jesus then asks the question:

*Which is easier, to say to the paralytic,
'Your sins are forgiven,'
or to say, 'Rise, pick up your mat and walk?'*

And to make His point, Jesus then says to the man:
rise, pick up your mat, and go home.

And to the amazement of all present, that's exactly what happens.

Jesus, the Son of God, has the power over physical diseases, as well as spiritual disease - namely sin.

On Wednesday, we begin the Season of Lent. We've all been through the Lenten thing countless times ... maybe we give up chocolate, or TV, or swearing. Maybe we give up nothing, and hope nobody asks. In a sense, maybe we're so confused by now that we don't even know if we should give something up, take something on, or whatever!

St. Paul gives us an answer to our Lenten dilemma ... which takes the form of a spiritual paralysis - when he tells us our answers in regards to spiritual matters - things involving God - should be "Yes," rather than "Yes and No."

At baptism and confirmation, we committed to live out the Gospel in our lives - and when God asks us to step out in Faith and do His Will - we often pull out the Magic 8 Ball and come up with an answer for God that sounds like: Reply hazy, try again.

But our Christian commitment is to approach God's Will with "Yes."

Finally, in the first reading, God speaks through the prophet Isaiah saying:

Behold, I am doing something new!

This Lent, let us take God up on that prophetic Word - let us ask Him to *do something new* with our lives. Let us cast aside our own spiritual paralyses ... and stop living the Christian life with a Magic 8 ball. Let us re-commit our lives to Jesus Christ and the Gospel - trusting in God's grace, and enter the Holy Season of Lent with a desire to allow God to *do something new* in our lives.