

HOLY TRINITY

ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH



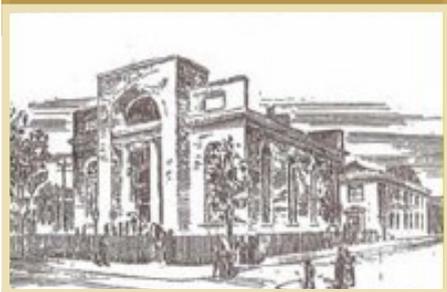
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CHURCH BULLETIN

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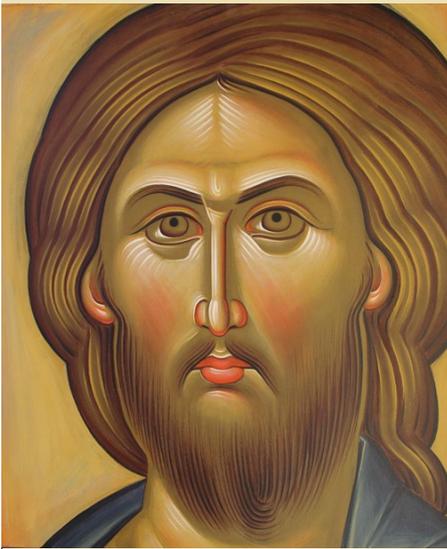
Sunday of Saint Gregory Palamas

Gospel Reading **Marc 2: 1– 12**



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At that time, When he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. So many gathered around that there was no longer room for them, not even in front of the door; and he was speaking the word to them. Then some people came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and after having dug through it, they let down the mat on which the paralytic lay. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, "Why does this fellow speak in this way? It is

blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" At once Jesus perceived in his spirit that they were discussing these questions among themselves; and he said to them, "Why do you raise such questions in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Stand up and take your mat and walk'? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the paralytic — "I say to you, stand up, take your mat and go to your home." And he stood up, and immediately took the mat and went out before all of them; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

Apostle Reading **Hebrews 1: 10 - 2: 3**

Brethren, "In the beginning, Lord, you founded the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands; they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like clothing; like a cloak you will roll them up, and like clothing they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will never end." But to which of the angels has he ever said, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet"? Are not all angels spirits in the divine service, sent

to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation? Therefore we must pay greater attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. For if the message declared through angels was valid, and every transgression or disobedience received a just penalty, how can we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? It was declared at first through the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him.

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Synaxarion Sunday March 15, 2020
(Sunday of Saint Gregory Palamas, the 2nd of the Great Lent): Holy Martyrs Agapius, Publius and Timolaus

H.E. Metropolitan Nicolae's Pastoral Message Concerning the Coronavirus Pandemic

Reverend Fathers,
Esteemed members of the Parish Councils,
Beloved Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

Both in the United States and in more and more nations throughout the world the emergence of the Coronavirus has created a situation that is altering our normal way of life. Everyone is being tested, even those of us who have faith in God's mercy. As Christians we are called to something more, to demonstrate this faith through our patience and love for one another, especially the vulnerable among us. The Church has always respected and valued persons gifted with the grace of healing. We should listen those entrusted with guarding public health. Even as we know that God can and does work wonders, we also know that we should never "put God to the test." Yesterday, 12 March 2020, we convened an extraordinary teleconference session of the Eparchial Council of our Romanian Orthodox Metropolia of the Americas under the Presidency of His Eminence, Archbishop and Metropolitan Nicolae, including a representative of AROLA, in order to evaluate the present situation, and make recommendations regarding the spiritual life of our communities in those places effected by the epidemic. We would like to share with you the following information: Presently, the situation in the United States is: 41 have died and over 1,600 persons have been infected (the report of the CDC as of 03/13/2020). The virus is in 47 states, including the District of Columbia, and the most affected areas are in Washington State (the Seattle area) with over 457 sickened, New York State (NYC) with 328, and the State of California (primarily Santa Clara) with 198 cases. As a result, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), at the Federal level, as well as the agencies of the states most effected by COVID-19, have adopted steps follow.

After consulting the members of the Eparchial Council, we are offering the following spiritual guidelines for the parishes under the jurisdiction of our Metropolia, in the United States, as well as in the nations of Latin America:

- First of all, we urge all of you: clergy, monastics, and faithful, to direct your firm prayers to our Savior Jesus Christ, the Physician of our souls and bodies, and to ask for the intercessions of the Most Holy Theotokos, and all the Saints, to preserve and defend us against this epidemic. We should similarly pray for all those infected and their families, as well as the medical teams engaged in caring for those sick;

- You should also add to the services, at the Litany of Fervent Supplication, special petitions in times of epidemic illness, as is found at the back of the Liturghierul. And, in those places where there are Holy Relics, you should bless the faithful with

the Reliquary in which these Holy Relics have been placed;

- The faithful should sign themselves daily, with the sign of the Cross, as well as their children, along with signing the Cross over their food and drink;

- We recommend that as soon as possible the Mystery of Holy Unction be celebrated in every parish of our Metropolia. The faithful should then take the Oil they receive from this Mystery and anoint themselves and their children daily, for the healing of their souls and bodies, with the sign of the Cross on their forehead, throat, and hands; • Each morning, before one has eaten, the faithful should take from the anaphora and drink from their reserve of Holy Water, and also sprinkle their homes in the sign of the Cross. We urge the parishes to prepare the Holy Bread (Prescura) as hygienically as possible, as well as the Anaphora (Antidoron) for distribution to the faithful. A person specially designated by the priest should be the only one who prepares the Anaphora wearing gloves in order to distribute it to those present;

- One should pray the Lord's Prayer as often as possible, as well as the Jesus Prayer: Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us and your world, with our thoughts directed to all those suffering or who are seized by anxiety and fear; • Each WEDNESDAY EVENING, at 9pm EDT; 8pm CDT, and 6pm PST, until this pandemic passes, the clergy and the faithful of the parishes of our Metropolia are asked to read the Paraklesis to the Theotokos in their homes.

In addition to the spiritual direction given above, we also have some general guidelines that are extremely necessary in order to combat this pandemic:

1. A notice — in both English and Romanian — should be placed at the entrance to the Church with the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) recommendations for preventing becoming ill with the Novel Coronavirus Covid-19 (thorough hand and face washing with soap and water, covering mouth and nose for those coughing or sneezing, frequent disinfecting of objects and surfaces, maintain "social" distances of 6ft between persons, etc.). Please find attached the materials and recommendations.

Detailed measures that can be taken may be found on the CDC site at: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/prevention.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fabout%2Fprevention-treatment.html

2. At the parish level, when possible, there should be consultation with competent medical personnel to identify

Coronavirus (i.e., persons who appear to have a cold, should be advised to stay at home; a recommendation by the priest to persons suspected of having the flu or this virus who regularly come to Church, to seek medical attention; to disinfect the accesses and 3 hallways of the facility and to air-out the Church and building), also to disinfect the liturgical area before and after each service;

3. A place at the entrance of the Church should be designated for persons to sanitize their hands, with a proper product;

4. Measures established by the civil authorities should be respected and cooperated with, at the same time assuring religious liberty for the faithful to participate in the liturgical life of the Church and to receive religious assistance in the church and their homes. The CDC has created a set of regulations for religious organizations to prepare for and manage this pandemic. We ask you to review all of these measures at the link below: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/index.html>

5. Where possible, the Parishes should establish a weekly program where the priests might be able to respond to all the requests of the faithful for Confession, Communion, and various prayers, in order to lessen the crowding of faithful in the Church;

6. Toward the end of the service, before the Dismissal, special prayers should be read for repentance, cessation of the present epidemic, for the recovery of those ill, and for the spiritual strengthening of medical teams and the persons working for preventing and combating the epidemic.

Before the Dismissal of either the Divine Liturgy, Vespers, or Compline, the priest says: Let us Pray to the Lord! The faithful respond: Lord have mercy! Then the priest, facing east, reads this prayer on the solea:

Lord our God, You who are rich in mercy, and with careful wisdom direct our lives, listen to our prayer, receive our repentance for our sins, bring an end to this new infectious disease, this new epidemic, just as you averted the punishment of your people in the time of David the King. You who are the Doctor of our souls and bodies, grant restored health to those who have been seized by this illness, raising them from their bed of suffering, so that they might glorify You, Merciful Savior, and to those who are healthy keep them from every sickness. By your grace, Lord, bless, strengthen, and preserve, all those who out of love and sacrifice care for the sick, either in their homes or in the hospitals. Remove all sickness and suffering from your people, and teach us to value life and health as gifts from You. Give us Your peace, O God, and fill our hearts with unflinching faith in Your protection, hope in Your help, and love for You and our neighbor. For Yours it is to have mercy on us and save us, O our God, and to You we

give glory: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and forever, to the ages of ages. The faithful respond: Amen.

7. We would suggest that the parish priests and members of the parish councils collaborate with other Orthodox churches in their area, the Honorary Consuls of Romania, and other associations and foundations in the creation of committees to assist the elderly in their respective communities who might be living alone, as well as those with compromised immune systems who might become isolated in their homes. We know from CDC information that the elderly and persons with compromised immunity are advised to limit 4 their exposure to the public, in stores, public spaces of all types, buses, trains, etc. Similarly, the CDC recommends voluntary home quarantining for other persons, who seem to be perfectly healthy, if it is presumed that they have come in contact with a possibly infected person. After they have contacted their family physician for a personalize action plan, and the person if cannot leave their home, or has the need for deliveries of necessities, these committees could be of help. We also suggest that the priest regularly contact by telephone persons in the parish over 65, checking on them, and responding to whatever they might need, and ensuring them that they are remembered in our prayers at the Divine Liturgy and the other Holy Services.

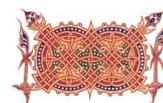
8. Religious Education Classes should not be suspended, but the parish priest in collaboration with the director of parish religious education and the teachers should take special care to ensure that the spaces have been sanitized and measure implement to guarantee the children's safety

9. The clergy do not have the blessing to grant interviews to the press. Rather, they should direct all these inquiries to official communications from the Metropolia.

Finally, we again urge you to pray. Pray for those who are sick. Pray for those who are ministering to them. Pray for those who have been entrusted with directing this effort to contain and eliminate this illness, in the government and public health organizations. Pray for the medical researchers and the doctors who are searching for a vaccine. Pray for those who are frightened, and who need us to console them. And, we should pray for one another! God, who is merciful and loving, will not abandon us. He will, as He always has, rescue and comfort us!

With Hierarchical blessing and concern,

† Archbishop and Metropolitan Nicolae



Sermon on the Sunday of St Gregory Palamas

In one of the Psalms we can read the following words: Those who have sown with tears will reap with joy... If in the course of weeks of preparation we have seen all that is ugly and unworthy in us mirrored in the parables, if we have stood before the judgement of our conscience and of our God, then we have truly sown in tears our own salvation.

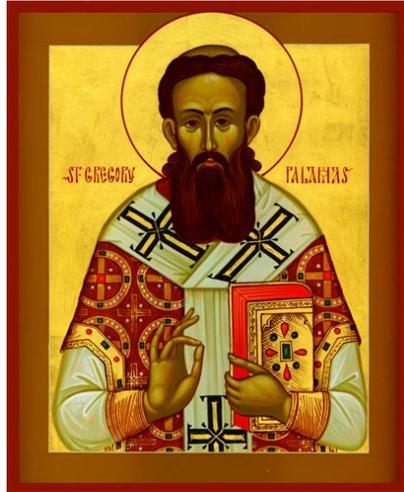
And yet, there is still time because even when we enter into the time of the harvest, God gives us a respite; as we progress towards the Kingdom of God, towards the Day of the Resurrection, we still can, at every moment, against the background of salvation, in the face of the victory of God, turn to Him with gratitude and yet, brokenheartedness, and say, 'No, Lord! I am perhaps the worker of the eleventh hour, but receive me as Thou promised to do!'

Last week we have kept the day of the Triumph of Orthodoxy, the day when the Church proclaimed that it was legitimate and right to paint icons of Christ; it was not a declaration about art, it was a deeply theological proclamation of the Incarnation. The Old Testament said to us that God cannot be represented by any image because He was unbottomed mystery; He had even no Name except the mysterious name which only the High Priest know.

But in the New Testament we have learned, and we know from experience that God has become Man, that the fullness of the Godhead has abided and is still abiding forever in the flesh; and therefore God has a human name: Jesus, and He has got a human face that can be represented in icons. An icon is therefore a proclamation of our certainty that God has become man; and He has become man to achieve ultimate, tragic and glorious solidarity with us, to be one of us that we may be one of the children of God. He has become man that we may become gods, as the Scripture tells us.

And so, we could last week already rejoice; and this is why, a week before, when we were already preparing to meet this miracle, this wonder of the Incarnation, softly, in an almost inaudible way, the Church was singing the canon of Easter: Christ is risen from the dead! – because it is not a promise for the future, it is a certainty of the present, open to us like a door for us to enter through Christ, the Door as He calls Himself, into eternity.

And today we remember the name of Saint Gregory Palamas, one of the great Saints of Orthodoxy, who against heresy and doubt, proclaimed, from within



the experience of the ascetics and of all believers, proclaimed that the grace of God is not a created Gift – it is God Himself, communicating Himself to us so that we are pervaded by His presence, that we gradually, if we only receive Him, open ourselves to Him, become transparent or at least translucent to His light, that we become incipiently and ever increasingly partakers of the Divine nature.

This is not simply a promise; this is a certainty which we have because this has happened to thousands and thousands of those men and women whom we venerate as the Saints of God: they have become partakers of the Divine nature, they are to us a revelation and certainty of what we are called to be and become.

And today one step more brings us into the joy, the glory of Easter. In a week's time we will sing the Cross – the Cross which was a terror for the criminals, and has become now a sign of victory and salvation, because it is to us the sign that God's love has no measure, no limits, is as deep as God is deep, all-embracing as God is all-embracing, and indeed, as tragically victorious as God is both tragic and victorious, awe-inspiring, and shining the quiet, joyful light which we sing in Vespers.

Let us then make ourselves ready to meet this event, the vision of the Cross, look at it, and see in it the sign of the Divine love, a new certainty of our possible salvation; and when the choir sings this time more loudly the canon of the Resurrection, let us realise that step by step God leads us into a victory which He has won, and which He wants to share with us.

And then we will move on; we will listen to the Saint who teaches us how to receive the grace which God is offering, how to become worthy of Him; and a step more – and we will see the victory of God in Saint Mary of Egypt and come to the threshold of Holy Week. But let us remember that we are now in the time of newness, a time when God's victory is been revealed to us, that we are called to be enfolded by it, to respond to it by gratitude, a gratitude that will make us into new people – and also with joy!

And joy full of tears in response to the love of God, and a joy which is a responsible answer to the Divine love. Amen!

Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh

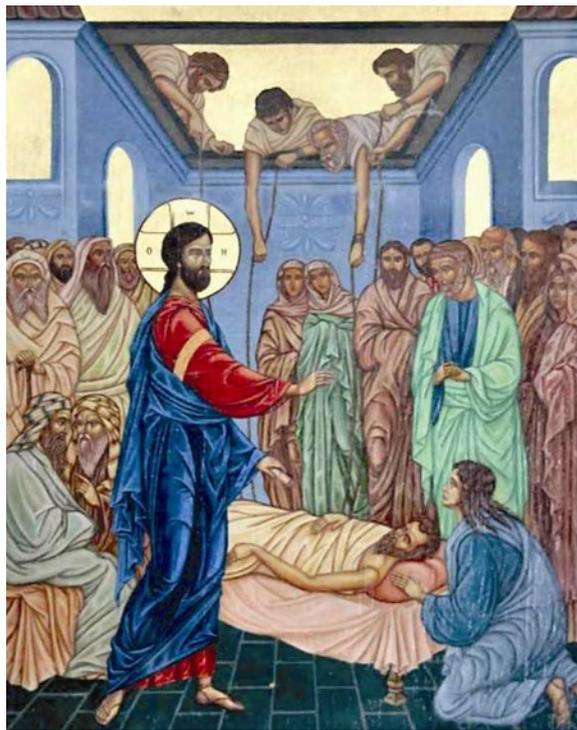
The Lord Who Sees Into Our Hearts

This is the second Sunday of Great Lent, when we remember the great Archbishop of Thessalonika, St. Gregory Palamas. During Lent, the Gospel readings are taken from St. Mark, and this week we hear the account of the healing of a paralytic man in Capernaum (Mark 2:1-12). Capernaum was the largest city in the region of Galilee. It was not far from Nazareth, where Jesus lived as an adult. This account begins with his return to Capernaum after having begun his ministry touring the cities and towns of Galilee.

St. Mark records that after he had been baptized in the Jordan by John, and then tempted in the desert by the devil, Jesus started preaching of the coming “kingdom” (Mark 1:15). Shortly after, He called his first disciples (v. 1:16-20) and then proceeded to: heal a man with an unclean spirit (v. 1:21-28), lift the fever of Peter’s mother-in-law (v. 1:29-32), and cure many other sick and demon-possessed people (v. 1:32-34). He went on a “preaching tour” in the surrounding cities and towns, and during this time healed a leper (v. 1:40-45). When he returned to Capernaum the word had spread of the miracles and wonders. He is now famous. People flocked to see and hear him. St. Mark records that when they heard that he was home, “so many gathered around that there was no longer room for them, not even in front of the door” (v. 2:2). Jesus “was speaking the word to them” and everyone wanted to listen.

While Jesus was speaking, four men came to the house where he was carrying a paralyzed man on a stretcher, and because they could not enter through the doorway, they tore up part of the roof and lowered the paralytic down through the hole. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven” (v. 5). Because of the faith of these four men as well as that of the paralytic, Jesus healed the man, but he does it in such a way as to truly display his power as the Son of God.

The scribes who were sitting and listening to Jesus immediately understood the importance of what he was saying. They said to themselves — that is, they questioned in their hearts — “Why does this fellow speak in this way? It



is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?” (v. 7) Jesus turns to them and said, “Why do you raise such questions in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Stand up and take your mat and walk?’” (v. 8-9)

Jesus just revealed an even greater miracle. He showed his true power. He knew their thoughts. He could read their hearts. The prophets said that God alone had the power to know the human heart. For example, Solomon says of God, “only you know the human heart” (2 Chronicles 6:30); calling on God, David says, “you who test the minds and hearts” (Psalm 7:9); Jeremiah says, “The heart is devious above all else ... who can understand it? I the Lord

test the mind and search the heart” (Jeremiah 17:9-10); and the Lord speaking to Samuel says, “the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7).

And so, after telling the scribes what they were thinking, in their hearts, Jesus then turned to the paralyzed man and said, “Stand up, take your mat and go to your home” (v. 11).

As you read this Gospel lesson you might be confused by verse 10. Just before the Lord told the paralytic man to take up his bed, St. Mark writes, “but that you may know that the Son of Man has the authority on earth to forgive sins.” While at first glance it seems that Jesus is addressing this to the scribes, when we study the verse in depth we see that the grammar and the context do not support this understanding. This verse was clearly meant for us, the readers. St. Mark wants us to understand that Jesus, even as the Son of Man, does not lose his authority as God to forgive sins. In other words, we should not let the wonder of the miracle distract us from the true importance of this event and who Jesus is

Moreover, we should remind ourselves of Jesus’ willingness not only to forgive our sins, but to bear them as well. This is the central focus of our Paschal preparation. Even while we marvel at his ability to heal the sick, we should also prepare our hearts to ask for his forgiveness, for this is indeed the greater miracle.

Fr. Nicholas Apostola

The Healing of the Paralytic

Today, brothers and sisters, on the 2nd Sunday of Great Lent -- the day on which we celebrate and commemorate St. Gregory Palamas -- we have before us a man who is paralyzed, and who has friends that care for him and bring him to the Lord to be healed. Now, as in all scripture, we should be careful. Read the scriptures slowly and carefully. See what the Lord says to you, see where you fit into this scripture, see where you have vices -



- or perhaps where by the grace of God, God has helped you in some thing and you have some virtue -- not of your own worth, but because God has helped you. This is how we should read the scriptures. This is not just history, and something that happened a long time ago; this story is given for our edification. The Lord healed many thousands of people, and we don't have very many records of His healings. So there must be something important about the way this man was healed for us to take note of.

He comes to Capernaum, and He is very popular in these days; this is still in the -- shall we say, the honeymoon period; all the common people Him. The scribes and the Pharisees didn't like Him, but they couldn't move against Him, and even some of them were somewhat taken by Him because of all the buzz that was around Him. Everyone was saying, "Can you believe what's happening? Everyone is being healed, and this man is speaking with such authority..." At the beginning of His ministry, there were many who loved Him and wanted to throng about Him (who would later leave Him, and even be accessories to His being slandered and murdered), and this is the case today. There are so many about Him that people can't even fit in the house where He is preaching. They are all about, outside the door, and He preached to them.

There is a man who is paralyzed, and he has asked his friends to help him. He has four that will take him on his bed, and want to bring him to Christ. Because of the press (the crowd of people), he couldn't get to Jesus.

What is this press, brothers and sisters?

This "press" is often mentioned in other healings; this press is the obstacles that we encounter in our Christian life. We encounter great obstacles. Now in the case of this man who was paralyzed, he wouldn't have the strength to

press through a group of people on his own, and even with help it would be immensely difficult; how can you carry a stretcher through a huge crowd of people? It is not possible.

So what did they do? They overcame the press by climbing onto the roof. A roof is high above all things. The scripture uses this analogy just as it uses mountains sometimes, to say that this is how we should be in our Christian

life. We should look up -- we should be thinking of spiritual things, not of carnal things, not of just daily things - - and we should elevate our mind -- to contemplate pure things, and things that God wishes us to know. These people got up on the roof. So of course it was a practical act to get up on the roof, so that they could break the roof tiles and let him down, and it was rather ingenious actually. But it is also an indication of how we should be, brothers and sisters.

You know, we encounter the press, and we stop in our tracks. Let's face it: this society is a very difficult one for a Christian to live in, because there is such coldness, and it infects all of us. There is such materialism, there is such hardheartedness, there is such wishy-washy-ness as far as what to believe. And even among the Orthodox, there is this sort-of mixing of the world with holiness -- and, of course, what becomes of hot and cold? It becomes lukewarm. And the Lord hates lukewarm.

The whole world is lukewarm. And we live in this difficulty. This is the press. It's quite hard for us to live in this world.

In fact, I was reading something from Fr. Anatoly the younger, who was a martyr, one of the last Optina elders. I can't quote it well, but basically the inference, the gist is of what he was writing is that Christians in the last age won't do great miracles, and their faith won't even be that great, and their purity won't be that great. But, because they have endured in a time which is the worst of all times, God will give them a crown for even being Christian during this time. Indeed, because it is a difficult time. It is a time of unbelief, it is a time of lukewarm-ness, and we are surrounded by it, and we are infected by it.

So it is difficult for us to get past the press. And why should we get past the press? Because we're paralyzed too. We have spiritual paralysis. We have spiritual blindness. If any man can look inside himself with any amount of honesty at all, he sees that he is really broken inside, incomplete. There are terrible sadnesses that happen in our life. There are terrible things that we just can't cope with completely.

So how do we get past the press? Get up on the roof.

Not just get up on the roof, but there must be labor involved in the Christian life, brothers and sisters. You know that one of my pet phrases, or pet ideas, is that the greatest heresy of all time is that the Christian life can be fought without labor, that salvation can be gathered and garnered without labor. This is the great heresy of our age -- it has been around now for quite some time -- that we can actually be saved without labor. Oh no, it takes great labor on our part to be saved; it takes effort for us to push by the press; it takes effort for us to get on the roof, to elevate our minds to things above, not to things below, not to carnal things, not to just day-to-day living.

I think day-to-day living is like a narcotic in our day; it is easy to lose track of holy things, to say "I haven't read scripture for so long, I forget my prayers, I have the wrong ideas, the wrong motivations," and to just sort of flow through life. We must fight through these things, get on the roof, have our minds elevated and break through the roof tiles -- which is effort. There is great effort involved in breaking through a roof.

So then, after these men had broken through the roof, they let the man down. What a spectacle that must have been. This man was not afraid to make his disability known to all. There must have been some people who thought that this was really craziness, and who might have laughed. But he was unafraid, because he wanted to be healed.

So when the Lord saw him, because of his efforts, He said "My son, thy sins be forgiven thee." Well the man came because he was palsied -- he couldn't walk -- and the Lord said "Thy sins be forgiven." He did this for a reason.

Of course, what is the source of all of our ills? Our sins!

So the Lord heals that which is the man's most pressing need first. And of course, he knew that the Pharisees and the Sadducees, the hypocrites, would think in their minds, "How can this man forgive sins? This is blasphemy," and they would chalk it up in their notebooks and think, "We're going to get this man."

The Lord then said something quite interesting, some

thing you should take note of. It seems sort of obvious in one way, but there is a very deep meaning in another. "Which is easier to say: 'Thy sins be forgiven thee,' or 'Take up thy bed and walk?'" Well, it's easy to say "Thy sins be forgiven thee," or something that you can't see internally, but if you say "Take up thy bed and walk" -- well, the man had better get up, or else Jesus would be exposed as a charlatan. Well, that's rather obvious, but there is a deep meaning here, brothers and sisters. Not an obvious meaning; you have to think a little bit.

The Lord raised the man up from his bed -- "Take up thy bed and walk, and go unto thy house." The reason he did this is to show that He, indeed, has power: He can raise the palsied man, He can give the man without eyes sight, he can cause the deaf to hear, he can raise the dead. These are tangible things that we see. The Lord did this because of our weakness.

We cannot see our sins being forgiven. It's not something that you can have evidence of. Sometimes there is evidence of the Lord healing a man in terms of, let's say if a man is an alcoholic and he is able to no longer have the demon of drunkenness, or some other such thing, but for the most part, when our sins are forgiven, the Lord knows, and we know, but it is not an obvious thing. That's why the Lord said "Which is easier to say: 'Thy sins be forgiven thee,' or 'Take up thy bed and walk?'" He was trying to show us "I can do both." Yes, I can say "thy sins be forgiven," and it is not an obvious thing, but I can also raise up the palsied man.

There is another meaning as well. The man's sins were forgiven AND his body was made whole. Jesus Christ's resurrection affects the whole man. Every aspect of our personality is affected by the resurrection. This is why a Christian should not feel defeated by anything in his life -- because the resurrection applies to everything. Now this is not to have some sort of Pollyanna view of the world and think that because we're Christians we'll be rich, famous, athletic and handsome. That might not be the case.

But Jesus Christ is interested in anything that goes on in our life. We must bring all the difficulties of our life to him. We as Christians don't do this very much; we suffer with our worries, our concerns, and I know many of you and I know that your concerns are not frivolous ones, they are not worldly concerns; they are spiritual things. But you must believe in the resurrection, and the one who truly believes applies the resurrection, with all of its implications, to himself, and his life's circumstances.

If Jesus Christ can raise up the palsied man, certainly all

the other things that He says must be true -- not just that He can raise the dead at the end of the age; He's going to make you alive now. The kingdom of God is within you. Now, not later. This is the meaning of having the man be healed both of his sins and of his palsy, of his bodily ailments.

Now how do we attain this healing, brothers and sisters? By effort. There is no substitute whatsoever for effort.

If a Christian does not struggle, does not strive, does not point himself to Jerusalem and not look back, does not try to ascend, as it were, to the roof, and labor, then he will not be changed. Or, perhaps, he'll bear fruit, but very little.

May God grant that we would labor, past all of the difficulties in our lives, past all of the frustrations, all of the distractions, all of our sinfulness, all of our bad habits that are so difficult to change, all that press, all that crowd -- that we labor past all that, and set our minds on things above, on holiness, on the purpose of our life, which is intimate knowledge of Jesus Christ.

And this intimate knowledge is only possible if we become like Him. We must become like Him to know Him.

This is why we must labor, brothers and sisters. Not because there are the Ten Commandments, the Law and all the rest; this is not the reason we must labor. The reason we must labor is that Jesus Christ wants us to know Him, intimately, He wants us to be healed of every single palsied condition, of every blindness, of every black spot in our souls, of every imperfection, so that we can gaze upon Him, not through a glass, darkly, but face to face -- and not in shame, but in indescribably joy. This is how He wants us to know Him. And the only way to know Him is to become like Him. This is why we labor for virtue.

May God help us to labor, and for the rest of this Lent also to struggle so that when we come to the Pascha, the Lord would touch us in a very special, unique way that we can't even imagine and understand, and strengthen us. May God help you.

Fr. Seraphim Holland (2002)

(Source: <http://www.orthodox.net/>)



HOLY TRINITY'S Liturgical Schedule from March 14 to March 22, 2020

Saturday March 14 (Soul Saturday):

9:00 am - Matins
9:30 am - Divine Liturgy
11:00 am - Memorial Service

Sunday March 15 (St Gregory Palamas Sunday, the 2nd of the Lent):

9:00 am - Matins
10:00 am - Divine Liturgy
11:00 pm - Sunday School
12:00 pm - Coffee hour

Wednesday March 18:

5:00 pm - Akathist

Friday March 20:

5:00 pm - Akathist

Saturday March 21:

9:00 am - Matins
9:30 am - Liturgy
11:00 am - Memorial Service
5:00 pm - Vespers performed by
HE Metropolitan Nicolae Condrea

Sunday March 22 (Cross Sunday, the 3rd of the Lent):

9:00 am - Matins
10:00 am - Hierarchical Divine Liturgy
1:00 pm - Dinner in Honor of
HE Metropolitan Dr. Nicolae Condrea

