

HOLY TRINITY

ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH



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CHURCH BULLETIN

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Sunday of the Paralytic

Gospel Reading John 5: 1 – 15



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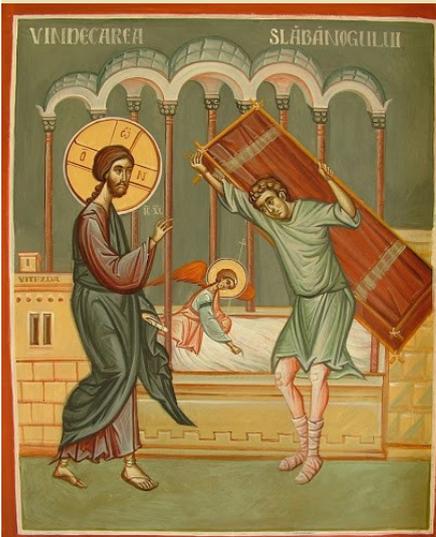
After this there was a festival of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate there is a pool, called in Hebrew Beth-zatha, which has five porticoes. In these lay many invalids—blind, lame, and paralysed. One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been there a long time, he said to him, ‘Do you want to be made well?’ The sick man answered him, ‘Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; and while I am making my way, someone else steps down ahead of me.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Stand up, take your mat and walk.’ At once the man was made well, and he took up his mat and began

to walk. Now that day was a sabbath. So the Jews said to the man who had been cured, ‘It is the sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your mat.’ But he answered them, ‘The man who made me well said to me, ‘Take up your mat and walk.’’ They asked him, ‘Who is the man who said to you, ‘Take it up and walk?’’ Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had disappeared in the crowd that was there. Later Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, ‘See, you have been made well! Do not sin any more, so that nothing worse happens to you.’ The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.

Apostle Reading Acts of the Apostles 9: 32– 42

Now as Peter went here and there among all the believers, he came down also to the saints living in Lydda. There he found a man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden for eight years, for he was paralysed. Peter said to him, ‘Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; get up and make your bed!’ And immediately he got up. And all the residents of Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord. Now in Joppa there was a disciple whose name was Tabitha, which in Greek is Dorcas. She was devoted to good works and acts of charity. At that time she became ill and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in a room upstairs. Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, who heard

that Peter was there, sent two men to him with the request, ‘Please come to us without delay.’ So Peter got up and went with them; and when he arrived, they took him to the room upstairs. All the widows stood beside him, weeping and showing tunics and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was with them. Peter put all of them outside, and then he knelt down and prayed. He turned to the body and said, ‘Tabitha, get up.’ Then she opened her eyes, and seeing Peter, she sat up. He gave her his hand and helped her up. Then calling the saints and widows, he showed her to be alive. This became known throughout Joppa, and many believed in the Lord.



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Synaxarion. Sunday May 19, 2019 - Sunday of the Paralytic (the 4th Sunday after Pascha): Holy Hieromartyr Patrick, Bishop of Prussia

Do You Want to Be Healed?

Christ is risen!
Truly He is risen!

Today, brothers and sisters, we continue on the Paschal theme, which is the *enlightenment of the Resurrection and how it occurs in real life*, not in our fantasy, but how it really occurs. It occurs with difficulties, gradually. All of the Gospels, so far, of the Sundays have been about gradual enlightenment, as is this one, the healing of the paralytic.

And there are basically two major pieces to this story.

There is a lot of deep theological symbolism. It's very beautiful and very profound. For instance, the five sides, the five porticoes, represent the Pentateuch, the law. Around the law is the water. The law shows about sin. It reveals sin, but it doesn't heal sin. Only the water heals sin, and that is of course the water of baptism.

The Lord is the angel, the angel of great counsel, the angel of the Lord. Actually, it was an archangel that troubled the water. But this angel represents Jesus Christ through Whom, when we are baptized, we are made alive and able to follow the Commandments. So the law is not obliterated; it is fulfilled by the waters of baptism.

And there are other deep symbolisms to everything. The people that are around waiting are humanity. And the various illnesses are indicative of various problems with sin. And of course, the sin itself of the paralytic is what caused him to be paralyzed. It's not considered an enlightened view in our day and age of scientific awareness of things, but the truth is that sin causes illnesses. A lot. Often. Now, we see a medical connection between various things, such as when a person drinks too much, and gets cirrhosis of the liver, and there are many other cases sin where causes illness, especially mental illness.

So those are some of the symbolic things. There's a bunch more, to be honest with you, but the real meat, the real important part of this miracle, is the *dialog between the Lord and the man*. Each thing said is very important to understand.

So Jesus comes to the man; He says, "Wilt thou be made whole?" Here is a man who's been 38 years as a paralytic, unable to walk, unable to really care for himself.

And Jesus asks, really, a rather curious question. Wilt thou be made whole? Do you want to be made whole?



Do you want to be healed? Well, that's why he's sitting there. He wants to be healed. But the Lord *asks* this question for a reason. He knew the answer. He knew the man wanted to be healed.

But how did the man answer the question? In a very curious way. He said, "Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to help me and get me down; someone always gets down ahead of me, so he's healed and I'm not". He didn't answer that he wanted to be healed. He answered that he couldn't be

healed *because of this and that obstacle*.

The man wanted to be healed; there's no doubt whatsoever. He was a man of great endurance. Can you imagine? Day after day coming, waiting for the troubling of the water which only occurred occasionally, and when it occurred he was always too late to get help. So he wanted to be healed, there's no doubt about that. But how he answered the question *shows something about human nature*.

And I hope that you understand and identify with this man, *because we are like him*. Oh, yes, we can talk about and I talked about in the past that paralysis is also indicative of how sin paralyzes us; I'm not talking about that right now. That's true. That's very true, lamentably for us. But the Lord is constantly asking us: Do you want to be healed? And we don't really answer Him: "Yes, of course I want to be healed!" Instead we answer Him: "*I can't because of this and that*." This is not so much in our minds that we say this, not explicitly, but by our actions. There is a type of despondency or indifference or distraction that takes over our lives.

The Lord asks: "Do you want to be healed?"

We answer: "Well, Lord, my life is too busy to pray. I can't seem to find the time. I can't get in the right set of circumstances so that I have time to read the Bible. I struggle against this person that I don't like and that has harmed me and I have evil thoughts about them."

Well, have you thought about praying for them? Have you thought about forcing yourself to do something good for them? Have you thought about confessing this sin? Have you thought about reading the Scriptures? Have you thought about going to the Services? Communing frequently? There are a lot of things that can help us.

See, when the Lord says, "Do you want to be whole" to this man, this is *encompassing all the things that He says to us*. And there are a lot of things that He says, not just the things that I mentioned, but day-to-day. Everything we do is a choice. We are always making a choice. You've chosen to be here rather than to sleep in. Everything is a choice, good or bad. *It's really that simple. You choose the right or you choose the wrong*. And the more we choose the right, the better we become. The more we choose the wrong, either the worse we become or we just make little progress.

So the Lord is asking: Do you want to be whole? We can't answer like this man if we are really going to get healed, because it's not always that the Lord is going to ignore our answer like that and say, okay, get up and walk. He healed the man, but He also gave the man an order: Get up and walk, take up your bed and walk.

So actually, like I've said to you before, many times the *Gospels are, in microcosm, our whole life*. Things are compressed in the Gospels. So here, this getting up and walking represents our entire life, the following of the virtues, the struggle against sin, following the Commandments and prayer and fasting and desiring and mounting up from virtue to virtue. That's what this "getting up and walking" is.

And the bearing of the bed is the bearing of *the burdens of our neighbor*, so say the Fathers. So He's telling this man:

"Get up and bear the burdens of your neighbor. Mount from virtue to virtue. Struggle to follow the Commandments. In this you will be saved."

Because later on He said to the man, don't go on sinning or else a worse thing will befall thee. The man's problems were because of sin. So the Lord, when He commanded him to get up, wasn't just healing his legs; He was giving him the way of life: Get up and walk, follow the Commandments, bear your brother's burdens, don't judge him but love him.

The way of life is what the Lord told him. So we have to follow this way, or else we won't be alive. The man's healing was not just but the Lord said get up and walk. It wasn't just that He healed his legs. It was that He healed his way of life. He showed him the way to live. So the healing is not just a one time occurrence. *It is an ongoing thing*. For you, for me, for the paralytic, for every man, it's ongoing.

Let's test ourselves. I do this often. I'll be honest with you. I think about this particular Scripture and there are

others that are similar to it. *How much* do I really want to be made whole? I say I want to, but then I do stupid stuff or I'm lazy or I don't control my thoughts or I find that I didn't do very much that was profitable that day.

Do I really want to be made whole? Yes, absolutely, no doubt about it. But *the way I live* shows that I don't completely want to be made whole.

There are things that are lacking. It is the same thing with you. I know this, not because I am a seer of mysteries, but because I'm a human being and because you are human beings and I know something about human beings. And being human means you're weak, but you can become strong.

Being human means that you need healing and that God is here to provide it. It's all right here. There are angels among us right now. Do we see them? We should but we don't because the things that are black in us and dark in us. God came so that everything will be light, everything. So He's asking this question all the time: Do you want to be made whole? Well, do you or not?

And in this story there are basically three things that the Lord is teaching to be made whole.

Number one, negatively, when the man answered, I have no man to help me. Don't talk like that! You have Jesus Christ to help you. You have the Holy Spirit abiding within you. You're not alone. We should never answer like that. And when we do, we should castigate ourselves for saying it, censure ourselves. We should look for times when we answer like that. I would bet that there are times when you answer that like that. I do. It's wrong. Because we are not alone.

Also, the Lord said: Get up, take your bed and walk. So that is, if you want to be made whole, bear the burdens of others, struggle in the Christian life. There's no substitute for that. Without that, nobody can be saved; it won't happen.

And then the Lord also says: Don't keep on sinning. So that's how we can be made whole and believing that Jesus Christ is all we need, completely sufficient for us and that we are not alone and by desiring to following the Commandments and by walking. That's how we're made whole. It's a gradual process.

The paralytic felt very alone, but he was not. The paralytic didn't realize that his paralysis was because of his sin, but the Lord taught him. The paralytic thought more in terms of "I need my legs to be working." When the Lord taught him, he needs his soul to become purified. That is the way of salvation, to rise, take up our bed, bear the

burdens of our neighbor and be walking in the virtues.

So, brothers and sisters, watch carefully in your life how you answer this question, because I'll tell you, if this question is asked of you repeatedly throughout the day, do you want to be made whole or not? You're faced with: Do I do A or B? That's answering the question every time.

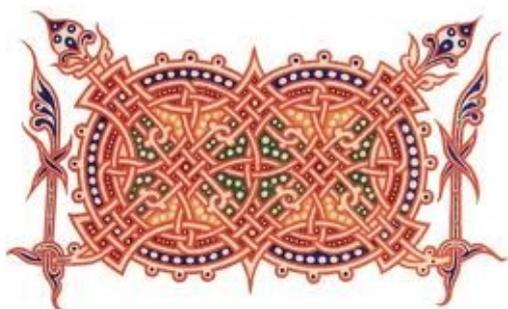
Learn to hear this question, to feel this question reverberating in your soul. Which one do you want to do? The good way or the bad way? Perhaps that bad way doesn't seem so bad; maybe it just seems that you're just taking a break or that you're only human or that, after all, you're powerless to stop a certain thing from happening. NO! You always have a choice. You always have a choice whether or not you desire to be made whole with all of your heart or not. Everything is a choice. So let us desire to be made whole.

This man was in infirmity for 38 years. Another beautiful piece of symbolism is that that's two short of 40. Forty is obtained by multiplying ten and four: The law and the Gospels. This is not any kind of numerology, mind you, but symbolism. The fullness of the virtues, the fulfillment of the law, obtained by following the way of the Gospels, which the Lord taught us, is the fullness of virtue. The man was two short of this. How much he was short (two) is not significant. The fact is that he was short of perfection. But he could have perfection, and so can we merely by always taking care to hear the question and answer it: Do you want to be made whole?

I hope you hear this question a lot now. And I hope you, with the best of your abilities, answer the question yes. Now the times that you don't answer it yes, may the Lord forgive. But strive to hear the question. Because, I'll tell you, it's being asked of you many, many times every day.

Amen.

Fr. Seraphim Holland



HOLY TRINITY'S Liturgical Schedule from May 10 to May 17, 2020

**Sunday May 10 (Sunday
of the Paralytic - the 4th af-
ter Pascha):**

9:00 am - Matins

10:00 am - Divine Liturgy

Wednesday May 13:

5:00 pm - Vespers

Friday May 15:

5:00 pm - Vespers

**Sunday May 17 (Sunday of
the Samaritan Woman -
the 5th after Pascha):**

9:30 am - Matins

10:00 am - Divine Liturgy

