

# HOLY TRINITY

## ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH



723 N BODINE ST PHILADELPHIA, PA 19123

# CHURCH BULLETIN

Vol. 13 No. 30 \* Sunday July 19, 2020 \* Editor: V. Rev. Fr. Nicolai Buga

## The 6th Sunday after Pentecost

### Gospel Reading **Matthew 9: 1 - 8**

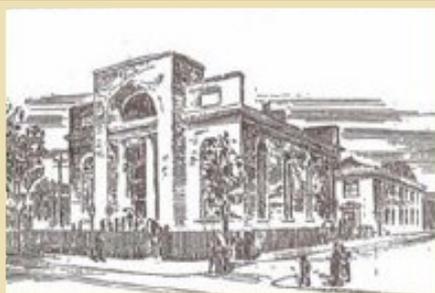
At that time, getting into a boat Jesus crossed over and came to his own city. And behold, they brought to him a paralytic, lying on his bed; and when Jesus saw their faith he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven." And behold, some of the scribes said to themselves, "This man is blaspheming." But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts?

For which is easier, to say 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say 'Rise and walk?' But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins" he then said to the paralytic -- "Rise, take up your bed and go home." And he rose and went home. When the crowds saw it, they were afraid, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men.

### Apostle Reading **Romans 12: 6 - 14**

*Brethren*, having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; he who teaches, in his teaching; he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who contributes, in liberality; he who gives aid, with zeal; he who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness. Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to

what is good; love one another with brotherly affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Never flag in zeal, be aglow with the Spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints, practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.



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**Synaxarion** Sunday July 19, 2020  
(Sixth Sunday after Pentecost): Holy Venerable Macrina, sister of St Basil the Great; Holy Venerable Dius; Relics of St Seraphim of Sarov;  
**Monday July 19: Holy Prophet Elias**

# Homily on the Paralytic of Capernaum

I affirm in your presence this day that we're witnesses of a beautiful miracle this morning: through the living word of the Gospel, we see a paralyzed man who cannot walk on his own, healed of his paralysis by God, He who had made his legs in the first place and given this



man his first heart-beat in his mother's womb. For, as the Psalmist David says, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made...You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb" (Ps. 138). Christ God, as the Logos (Word) of God, through whom all things were made, knew this man and loved this man with a fatherly love even before he was presented to him.

Yes, the paralytic was brought to His Creator, our Creator, and He received healing from the Lord. He was given a new lease on life, a new beginning.

Every miracle, both those past and present, is a testimony of the truth of God, the truth that is God, in that it points us directly to the Kingdom of Heaven, to the restoration of the human race. Every miracle reminds us of God's defeat of sin and death on the cross, His triumphant resurrection from the dead, His harrowing of Hades, His glorious ascension, and His victorious and final Second Coming when all that Christ has assumed, will restore all those who have joined the new race of Adam in Christ and we will see a new heaven and a new earth in which Christ will be all in all. Miracles are a sign of the "eschaton," the reality of the Kingdom of God after the Second Coming of Christ.

The healing of the paralytic alludes to all of these works and promises of God on our behalf, where those who are being saved will be gathered up to join the ranks of heaven in Christ God's near presence, where "sighing and sorrow shall flee away" (Isaiah 51:11).

A greater miracle is at work here in today's Gospel: We read that when Jesus saw the faith of those who had brought the paralytic to him, He instantly healed the man

of his paralysis? No! He said to the paralytic, "Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you." This was not what some were expecting; Chris's words must have come as quite a shock.

These men didn't pull up in a car, an

easy drive from the city on modern roads, and carry their friend the last hundred feet to lay him before Jesus. These men must have carried their friend a great distance. Why? Because they had faith that Jesus the Christ, the Messiah, could heal their friend of his condition. They would not have undertaken such an exhausting enterprise as to carry a grown man so many miles on foot without possessing great faith. And Jesus first says to the man not, "take up your bed and walk," but "your sins are forgiven you."

Christ clearly teaches us here the priority of our eternal souls over our decaying bodies. Our souls are eternal. Sin, having entered the world and separated us from Him who is Life itself, means that our bodies wear out "like a garment" (Job 13). It wasn't meant to be so: in Christ, we'll be given resurrected bodies at His Second Coming. And so here we see yet another sign of the eschaton to come.

Christ addresses the ultimate need of the paralytic. Yes, he needs his legs, but more importantly, he needs to be cleansed, purified, forgiven. More important than the healing of his legs is the healing of his soul, of his becoming an adopted son of the living God, a co-heir with Christ. Everything else pales in comparison.

By forgiving the sins of the man, Christ clearly declares Himself to be God for, as the scribes rightly understood, "who can forgive sins but God alone?" (Mk. 2:7; Lk. 5:21) Exactly! Their sinful hearts could not comprehend that the God who lovingly spoke creation into being through His Word (His Logos), would Himself enter into human nature to restore that nature, to restore a path to the Kingdom for His beloved sons and daughters,

the pinnacle of His creation, with whom He so dearly desires communion.

The Scribes instantly charge blasphemy. Then Christ, to deepen the faith of all those assembled and silence the actual blasphemers, does two things that reveal Himself to be God: first, He tells them what they are thinking, saying, "Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, Arise and walk?' But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins..." and then and only then, does Christ say to the man, "Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house." The man arose and departed to his house. Both of these miracles, the revelation of the inner thoughts of others and the healing of the paralysis prove that Christ is God.

What a joy! Can you feel it? Can you see it on the faces of this man and his friends? Their load has been taken from them. They walk home together, rejoicing, glorifying God. But the greatest joy is that this son of Adam has been forgiven, reconciled to God.

Before our baptism and the possibility of the renewal of that baptism through confession, we too are paralyzed by sin. Even in the life of an Orthodox Christian who has become part of the new creation, a beloved child of the eschaton, this world and all its confusion and hedonism may take hold of the unwary soul and paralyze it with addictions and habitual sins.

Those beset by any passions, repeated sins that paralyze our souls from progressing in our deification, our journey further up and further in the Kingdom of God and communion with the only Lover of mankind, here the words of our Lord, "Arise, take up your bed, and go unto your house." With the Lord, there is forgiveness, there is new life, there is renewal. Fittingly, the title given to this story in the Orthodox Scriptures is "the Paralytic Restored."

Christ God will restore us to if we come before His presence with faith, with the hope of restoration, of growth, of renewal in Him who is Life itself, the Great Physician of our souls. He alone is God, the only One who can forgive our sins, renew our baptism, and help us to progress in our participation in His life. Call on Him in time of need, entrust yourself to His grace and mercy. His grace is sufficient and His strength is perfected in weakness.

**Fr. Robert Miclean**



## **HOLY TRINITY'S Liturgical Schedule from July 19 to 26, 2020**

### **Sunday July 19 (Sixth Sunday after Pentecost):**

9:00 am - Matins

10:00 am - Holy Liturgy

11:30 am - Memorial  
services (Marcela Charles,  
Parascheva Betancourt and  
Cristina Kraiter)

12:00 pm - Coffee Hour

### **Monday July 20 – Holy Prophet Elias:**

9:00 am - Matins

10:00 am - Holy Liturgy

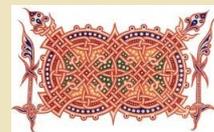
11:30 am - Coffee Hour

### **Sunday July 26 (Seventh Sunday after Pentecost):**

9:00 am - Matins

10:00 am - Holy Liturgy

12:00 pm - Coffee Hour

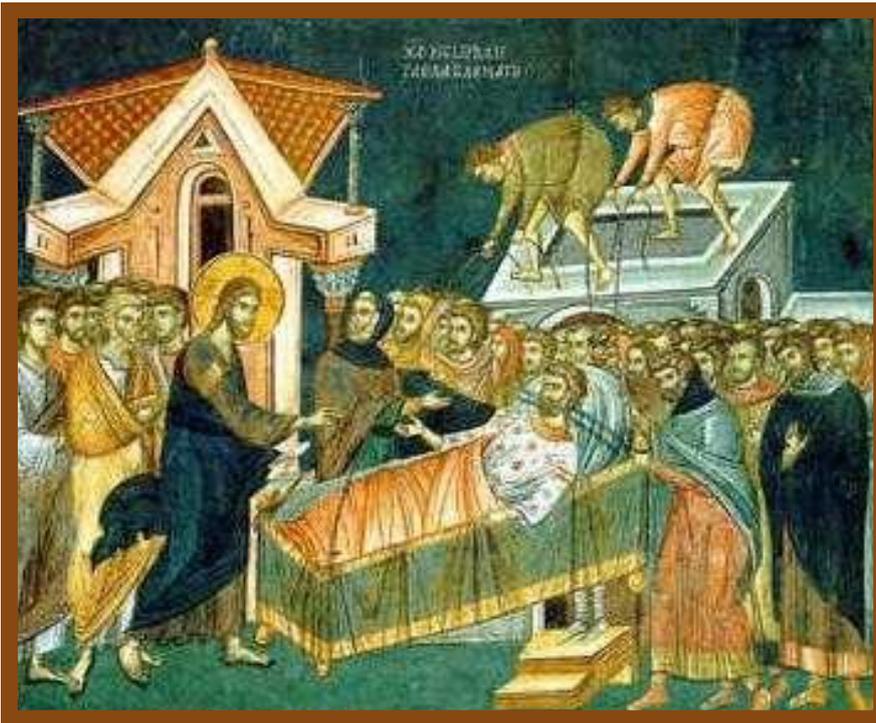


## On Spiritual Paralysis

The Gospel reading of last Sunday told us how the Gadarenes went out to meet Jesus and how they asked Him to “depart out of their coasts.” And this happened because all of them were infected with one sin, the passion for profit, the love of money. This was an insatiable thirst for wealth, more and more of it. And wealth came to them through large herds of swine which were grazing in their pastures. But according to Jewish Law, they had no right to keep them. In this was their sin, and they lived in sin, to satisfy only this passion, this idol of getting rich. And this passion seemed to unite them all. See how the Gospel says: “And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus and...besought Him that He would depart out of their coasts” (Mt. 8:34).

Yet not all inhabitants of this town were bad people. Undoubtedly, among them were those who wanted to see Jesus, who wanted to listen to His teaching, and maybe were ready to believe in Him. Salvation was so close, so very close. But this idol, this passion for profit enslaved them; and instead of asking the Lord to remain in their town, they asked Him to go away. They were already deprived of their freedom of will; through sin they were enslaved, a spiritual paralysis possessed them. The Gospel continues, “And He entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into His own city. And, behold, they brought to Him a paralytic, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the paralytic; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee” (Mt. 9:1-2).

There is physical paralysis, but there is also spiritual paralysis. Being paralyzed physically we want to do something, but either our hand or our foot does not move. But being spiritually paralyzed even to think is difficult, and we don't want to do anything — we lose heart. There is a desire to fulfill a commandment of Christ, and yet we cannot; something is



interfering, something is holding us back. And instead of Christ abiding in our heart — there is a storm, and Christ goes away.

What motivated the Gadarenes to ask Christ to leave their land? Sin — the passion for profit. And this sin brought them into spiritual paralysis, and they did not have enough spiritual fortitude to detain Christ with them.

So it happens to us. The only reason is sin. And sin is not only love of

money. There is a whole variety of rays from this “black diamond.” This means laziness, pride, vain talking, lying, condemnation, gluttony, anger, irritability, cruelty, any kind of impurity, despondency and still more and more. And we all suffer from these sins: whoever has any of these, this is sin. And this is what brings us to spiritual weakness, to spiritual paralysis. Let us look within ourselves and let us honestly recognize that, like the Gadarenes, we all live in spiritual weakness, in spiritual paralysis.

But let us not despond. The Gospel today gives us great comfort. With what words does Christ heal the paralytic? “Thy sins be forgiven thee.” This means that in bodily paralysis, also, the reason is often sin. And in spiritual paralysis, sin is always the reason. All you have to do is find this sin, this passion which stands between us and Christ; take it to the Lord and say: “Lord, heal me!” Then the Lord will tell us as He did the paralytic: “Thy sins be forgiven thee.... Arise, take up thy bed and go unto thine house” (Mt. 9:5-6).

And the storm will calm down, will go away from the heart, and Christ will fill it with quiet joy. The weakness will disappear and a new energy will appear in us, a new life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**Archbishop Andrei Rymarenko**  
(Source: <http://www.ppravmir.com>)

## Homily on the Day of Holy Prophet Elias

When we read the Bible, the Third and Fourth Books of Kings about the amazing acts of the holy Prophet Elias, our mind is astounded by them; we are amazed at many things: his extraordinary zeal for the glory of God and his total fearlessness in the work of cultivating faith amidst a pagan people (and such were the people of Israel at that time); our mind is amazed when we read of his extraordinary miracles; and we are most of all amazed when we read about the incredible power of his prayer, for you know that he commanded the elements with it—he forbade the rain to fall upon the Palestinian land for three and a half years, and then again by his prayer brought rain down to the earth.



He brought down fire from heaven, and it burned the sacrifice that had been drenched with water.

It is to Prophet Elias's prayer that I would like to direct your attention, for there is not sufficient time to speak of all the great things he did. However, I would like to talk not only about *his* prayer. We know that there were great ascetics of piety, great saints who also worked wondrous and magnificent miracles.

But I want the thought to reach your heart that not only does this kind of prayer, which works manifest miracles seen by everyone, not only the prayer of the Prophet Elias, and the prayers of the apostles, prophets, and martyrs work miracles. I want you to understand that any prayer will work miracles.

What miracles does it work? Not those glorious and amazing miracles that the Prophet Elias wrought, no. It works miracles unknown to anyone other than the one in whose soul these miracles happen.

The kind of prayer that was made by St. Seraphim of Sarov, St. Sergius of Radonezh, Sts. Anthony and Theodosius of the Kiev-Caves, St. Varlaam of Khutyn, St. Nilus of Sora, and many other monastic saints works unseen miracles.

St. Seraphim and St. Sergius were like angels in the flesh even while still alive; their souls were filled with deep faith, pure love for God and people. They shone with faith and love.

How did they attain such brightness? They attained it by their prayer—first of all by prayer. True, also by severe fasting and vigil.

Do you know that St. Seraphim of Sarov stood for a

thousand days and nights on a rock, praying to God? This amazing prayer made him an angel in the flesh. From this prayer divine love came to dwell in his soul, and his heart shone with such love that he greeted every person who passed by him with these words filled with love: my joy!

Do you see? Prayer worked a miracle in St. Seraphim's soul; it worked miracles in the souls of all the other monastic saints, of which there is an enormous number. Prayer worked miracles of patience in the martyrs, and this unfathomable patience astounded the souls also of those who witnessed their torments. Often even the executioners who tortured them

turned to Christ.

Thus, do you see that prayer that does not work obvious, astounding miracles works miracles in the hidden depths of human hearts.

It completely transforms these hearts, for the hearts of the monastic saints and martyrs are quite unlike the hearts of ordinary people—that mass of humanity whom Holy Scripture calls people of the earth, and I will dare to call “people of grass”, and it enflames the hearts of such people also.

Thus, know that in your prayer is the power of God, working miracles in your hearts. Know, that prayer is the most important of all the Christian's works. All his other works are small and insignificant, absolutely insignificant in comparison with the act and labor of prayer.

Just as every plant without water in dry soil withers, so also does the human soul wither if it is not fed with prayer. It also needs food and water, but a special water—that living water that Christ promised to the Samaritan woman when He talked with her; that water flowing in eternal life, about which he spoke in the temple in Jerusalem on the day of Mid-Pentecost.

This water is the water of God's grace, which is absolutely needful for every one of us. And we receive this living water, this spring of grace, through prayer.

But when I speak of prayer, I often get the reply, “I don't know how to pray. Teach me how to pray.”

How do I answer? First of all I answer that prayer is the greatest and hardest of all human works. We know that there is no difficult work that can be learned easily. Long study is needed for all such work, or for any art.

If long study is needed for human works, then is it even more needed for this greatest of all works. Study, study, and study endlessly—and you will obtain it.

But how should you begin this study? Here is how: there are many prayers that have been compiled and written by great God-pleasers, by great holy hierarchs, monastic saints, and martyrs.

Pray these prayers; do not imitate the Baptists who disdain these prayers and compose their own. Their prayers are weak and trite, for their spirit is worthless in comparison with the spirit of the holy fathers.

Do not think up your own prayers; pray using those prayers the Holy Church has taught you. However, when reading these prayers, delve into every word, catch yourself in every moment of straying, in every distraction from the words of prayer.

If you will pray like this, the holy prayers of the great God-pleasers will illumine your souls.

But there is yet another prayer—the Jesus prayer, which is the most important and necessary prayer for all monastics.

*“Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.”*

This prayer truly works miracles, and is therefore considered extremely important, if not the most important of all.

Learn this prayer, and begin with it. Learn it like this: close the door of your room. If you want you can stand, or if you want you can sit on a chair, or kneel.

Lowering your head, look first of all to your heart, thinking and remembering which sin of the great multitude of your sins most torments your heart, which of them is the most hateful to God.

If it is fornication, or adultery, think about that sin; if it is greed, think about that before all; if it is mercilessness and cruelty or lack of love, concentrate your thought upon that first of all.

Standing, sitting, or on your knees, find the most serious of your sins, lower your head and beg the Lord Jesus first of all for forgiveness of this most important sin of yours... It is best to pray the Jesus prayer using your prayer rope, saying: *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.*”

During this time think about this most serious sin. Repeat this prayer no less than one hundred times, always concentrating your thought on the most serious and

abominable of your sins. Beginning with this, make it a habit to remember all your other sins as well.

Praying the Jesus prayer, you will hold all the sins in your mind and ask the Lord for forgiveness not only of the most serious sin, but also for all your sins. This prayer will work a miracle in your soul. You will become ashamed; when you start confessing your onerous sin before God, you will feel the insistent desire to be free of it, to be loosed from this loathsome sin without fail.

Praying like this from day to day, you will more and more be freed from your main sin and from all your other sins, and your soul will be transformed.

You yourself will begin to notice how your relationship to your neighbors will change: you will notice that you are becoming more gentle, patient, meek, and humble.

You will treat people with great carefulness, you will take caution never to hurt or offend anyone. And the Jesus prayer will transform your heart and work this miracle—an unseen miracle of God’s grace in your heart.

This is what I wanted to tell you about prayer.

And if you want to cleanse your heart, if you want to stand without trembling before the Terrible Judgment of Christ, do as I advise you.

Pray, pray the Jesus prayer, and first of all repent and repent.

Repentant prayer should be your most important and constant prayer. However, according to the measure that it purifies your heart, you will learn to pray not only for yourself, but also for your neighbors both close and distant, and then for all mankind. Then the holiest, most God-pleasing prayer will come—prayer for those who hate and offend us.

Earlier I counseled you not to imitate the sectarians by making up your own prayers, and now I am telling you that there is a higher form of prayer—prayer without words, the cry of the soul to God, which opens the heavens and leads us to the most living communion with God.

May the Lord vouchsafe us all to attain such prayer!

But this will only come when we become true temples of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Saint Luke, Archbishop of Crimea**  
(Translation by OrthoChristian.com)

