

HOLY TRINITY

ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH



723 N BODINE ST PHILADELPHIA, PA 19123

CHURCH BULLETIN

Vol. 14 No. 21 * Sunday May 23, 2021 * Editor: V. Rev. Fr. Nicolai Buga

Sunday of the Paralytic

Gospel Reading John 5: 1 – 15



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723 N Bodine St.

PHILADELPHIA, PA 19123

Tel./Fax: 215-922-7060 www.holytrinityphiladelphia.com

V. Rev. Fr. Nicolai BUGA
Parish Rector

Rev. Fr. Timotei AVRAM
Assistant priest

Rev. Deacon Petru Bogdan MANEA

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.



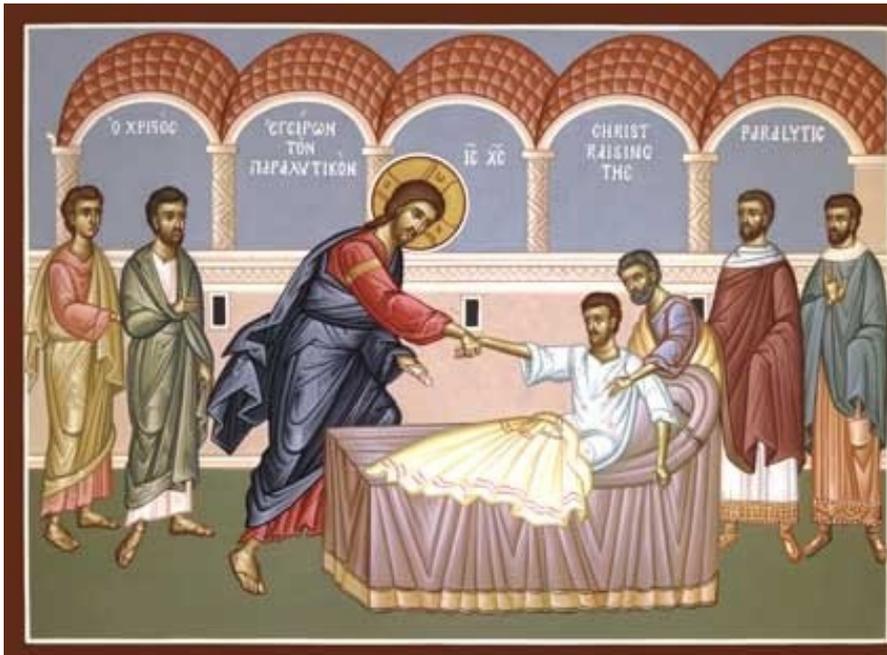
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Synaxarion. Sunday May 23, 2021 - Sunday of the Paralytic (the 4th Sunday after Pascha): Holy Hierarch Michael the Confessor, Bishop of Sinnada; Saint Mary the Myrrhbearer and wife of Cleopas

On the Sunday of the Paralytic

In the Gospel reading we heard earlier; the Evangelist John describes how a paralyzed man had been lying beside the pool of Bethesda waiting for the stirring of the waters by an angel so that he could be healed. His wait lasted not for an hour, or a few days, or even a few years, but Thirty-Eight years. As amazing as this man's patience and



perseverance may have been, perhaps what stands out even more is the fact that no one -- not a single person during the course of all these years had compassion on him and helped him into the pool. This aspect of the story is often forgotten, but it is important for us because we must never ignore the fact that situations of great suffering always exist in the world today. Countless people suffer everyday from different afflictions and many have no one to care for them. So for us, this Gospel message must be a call to action: We are all made in God's image and as such, are called to love our neighbors as ourselves. All of us, therefore, are responsible for one another. This is part of our mission as followers of Christ.

But in caring for each other we must also be aware that a person's suffering may not be as outwardly obvious to us as the affliction of the paralytic. If we imagine ourselves out and about during a regular day, and we look at the people around us---we have no way of knowing how broken they are, how much pain and agony there is in their lives, or how many broken hopes, how much fear and rejection and contempt bring them down. But even if we can't see it, there is a illness inside them---a spiritual struggle, which we all share in common: The same disease, which is sin. So we can say then, that suffering is not only the outward physical, but the inner, spiritual pain suffering. And Spiritual sickness is especially terrible because it harms our relationship with others and ultimately with God.

If we are to answer this call to help others, we must do some housekeeping of our own. So before we are able to

help the other, we must first examine ourselves and see what sins are plaguing us. And it takes great courage to look inside, because when we do, we find things that we don't like or don't want to accept. When we examine the causes of our own sufferings, we frequently try to find causes outside of ourselves. In short, we might try to place blame on someone or some-

thing other than

ourselves instead of taking responsibility for our sins. But the truth is that the cause is inside us and cannot be avoided. And we must find the strength to face it, with God's help. We must also realize that in fighting our spiritual battles, our sinful problems will not change overnight. Change takes a number of things: One is patience:

Consider the Paralytic, who after 38 years of suffering, could have complained when Christ arrived asking him "What took you so long?" but he didn't. Instead of an angry, bitter response to the Lord's question: Do you want to be healed? The paralytic responded, calmly and patiently. He was struggling, but never gave up hope. And we cannot give up hope either. In our darkest moments, when things may seem hopeless, we must never forget that God is with us and that he loves us. The paralytic suffered in loneliness because he had no one to help him. He could not bring about healing through his own efforts. So what did he do? He waited patiently for Christ. And we too, must follow this example, but do so when dealing with our afflictions.

The second thing change requires is a little work on our part. When the Lord commanded the Paralytic to "Rise, be made whole, take up your bed and walk" he was giving the paralytic a command. Taking up bed and walking involves obedience and work. A command, which we all received at baptism when we received the Holy Spirit enabling us with the ability to follow the commandments and to become pure. Taking up the bed is like taking up

our cross; it is our mission, to follow Christ's example and how he lived. A mission that we must continue to say "yes" to throughout our lives in spite of our times of spiritual struggle.

Third, it is necessary to trust in God by taking our free-will and submitting it to God by pacing our hope in Him— then we can begin to see our sufferings turn to healing and we can also help others who suffer, by letting Christ work through us. It is only then, that we can look at one another with a true understanding and with proper attention, so that we can reach out to each other and truly love our neighbor as ourselves.

Finally, the Gospel closes with a warning: which Jesus expressed to the Paralytic after his healing, but also to all of us.

Jesus says: "Sin no more, so that nothing worse happens to you." In other words, now you have been healed, be careful not to practice a sinful life, in order that nothing worse happens to you.

This is a warning to us:

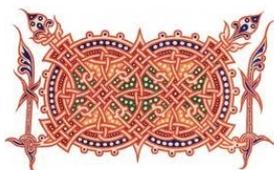
If we show no sign that we want to be healed; if we try to hide from our sins instead of facing them and taking responsibility for them...if we don't place our trust and hope in God and don't obey the command to rise and carry our cross, then we too will continue to lie in sickness, or fall into a worse spiritual sickness, which may make the Paralytic's 38 years seem like a short time.

So what is the way out? What is the solution? As a wise priest once wrote: The answer is given in today's Gospel. The way out is Christ, He who healed the paralytic. And we must be ready to receive him as did the paralytic. To trust God and let him work through us. For Christ can heal physical illness and spiritual illness not only because He overcomes sin, but also because He can overcome the ultimate consequence of sin - death itself.

Christ is Risen!

Fr. Philip Begley
(May 6, 2012)

(Source: <https://www.stmaryorthodoxchurch.org/>)



HOLY TRINITY'S Liturgical Schedule from May 23 to May 30, 2021

Saturday May 22:

12:00 pm—Baptism (Mihalache
-Hashmi Family)

Sunday May 23 (Sunday of the Paralytic - the 4th after Pascha):

9:00 am - Matins
10:00 am - Divine Liturgy
11:30 am - Sunday School
12:00 pm - Coffee hour

Saturday May 29:

12:00 pm—Baptism (Moraru
Family)

Sunday May 30 (Sunday of the Samaritan Woman - the 5th after Pascha):

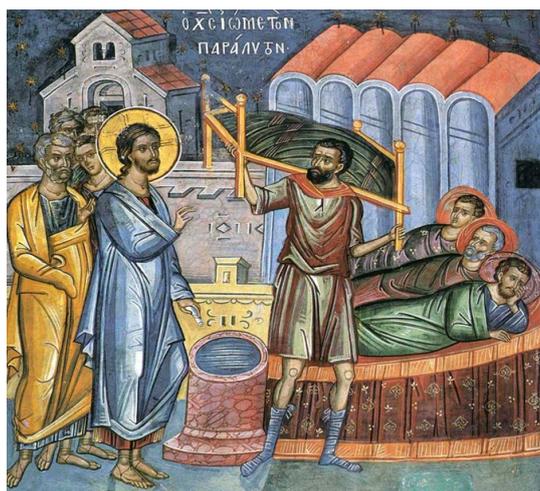
9:00 am - Matins
10:00 am - Divine Liturgy
11:30 am - Sunday School
12:00 pm - Coffee hour

“I have no man!”

Today, brothers and sisters, this healing of the paralytic by the Sheep's Pool is a well of deep theology; but there is something that is so important that I want to just speak about it.

The words of the man and the temperament of the man and the character of the man - they reflect both how we should be and how we are.

The Lord says, "Wilt thou be made whole?" And the man answered, "Sir, I have no man coming when the water is troubled to put me in the water."



These are the most important words to me that jump out of the page every time I read them; I feel them deeply because I feel my own human need. I hope you do too. He has no man to help.

The Theologian says that he had been 38 years in his infirmity; 38 years he waited by this pool where people were periodically healed. He was a paralytic, which means he couldn't move on his own. So if he wanted to be first to get to the water, somebody had to help him or else there was no chance whatsoever. But he said he had no man to help him, and despite all this he still waited.

There is a great important mystery in this. We see this a lot at this time of year, this season. See, people that they have lost some amount of hope but not all of it because they believe in our Lord, they don't see rationally how they are going to get fixed or how a situation is going to be amended. But they want to stay close to God.

This man had no idea how he was going to get healed. It was really not rational at all for him to sit there and wait when it was a done deal that somebody would get there before him since he couldn't move on his own. It didn't make any sense. It's kind of crazy. But he had faith and perseverance and patience.

Patience does not look at likelihood. Patience only looks to God. And that's what this man did. But in the midst of our patience we have these feelings like this man had: I have no man to help me. Now, he was speaking of course to the only man, the God-Man Who could help him. But he didn't know that when he said it, and he must have thought many times before, I have no man to help me. And yet he waited by the pool.

Thomas did not believe that the Lord was raised. All of his friends, all of the Apostles, the women, were talking

about Him being raised from the dead, that they had seen Him, that He had appeared to Peter, to the Theotokos, to Luke and Cleopas, to Mary Magdalene and to The Eleven, but he didn't believe. He couldn't believe. Something was just not working in him so he could believe. That happens to us. But he stayed. And eight days later he saw the risen Lord.

The Myrrh-Bearing Women thought that they were going to anoint a dead man, He who had been their hope, and now He was

in the grave according to their understanding. Of course, He was not, but they acted upon their incorrect assumption that He was still dead. And they went. And they were filled with wonder and saw that He was raised.

Peter denied the Lord, and deeply despondent, wept and stayed around, and the Lord appeared to him on the day of the Resurrection. And then later on, some time in the forty days, healed him by that wonderful dialog that is at the end of St. John's Gospel.

We should be like these people. We are already like them in weakness. We are already like them in doubts. We are already like them in thinking, I have no man to help me. Now, I'm saying that, but you might disagree with me and say, oh, I believe in God; I believe God helps me in all things. Of course that's true. But we cannot believe in God as much as God is, so to that extent, measuring our belief in God against who God is, we must say that we don't believe in Him. We are finite and He is infinite, and yet He will help us to believe in the infinite.

This man said, I have no man. He had good character, waiting, patience and he didn't answer our Lord's question, which could be construed as a thoughtless question by some. Without any kind of anger, any kind of resentment, he just answered Him plainly exactly what was on his heart, the depth of his need and the depth of his depression: I don't have anybody that will help me. But the Lord helped him.

So it has to be with you, brothers and sisters. You have to come to the conclusion, deeply felt within you, that there's nobody that can help you. Nobody. Only the God-Man Jesus Christ.

We depend on lots of other people for help, and of course the Lord desires that His creatures help one another. And He has entrusted the running of the church,

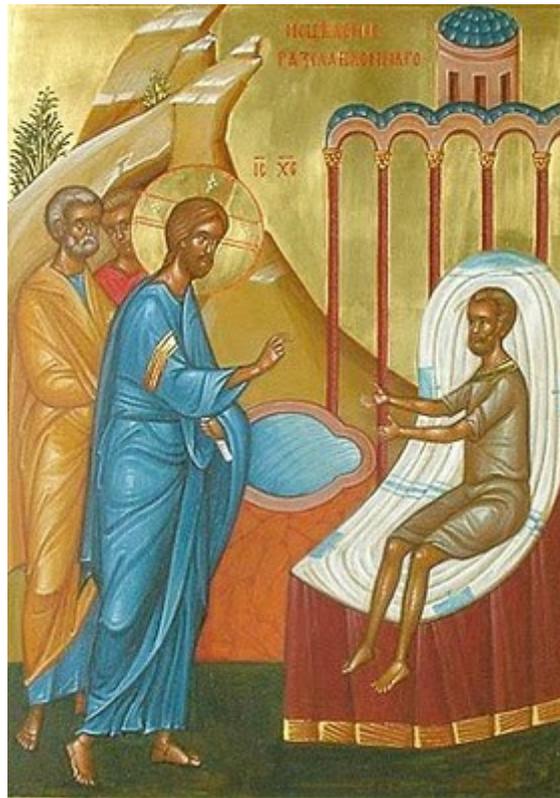
the Mysteries, Confession, preaching, to His preachers. He no longer walks the earth preaching to us; He expects us to do it. He no longer walks the earth healing; He expects us to heal. But always we heal because God works within us, so when we really get down to it, there is really no man that will help us except Jesus.

I think really the key to progress in the Christian life is to feel the depth of the need of this man. Or you can pick any one of many others in the Scriptures. The woman with the issue of blood. The woman who had lost her son. There's dozens of examples where people had deep need and had no idea how to fix it. Sometimes they had some idea that someone might help them. Like when the Shunammite woman went to Eliasaios in a time which was not the season because her son died; she had no idea what he would do or how her son would be raised, but she knew she had to go to him because he was holy. Other times people have no idea whatsoever that are without any idea, any clue.

We should not be without any idea. We should have always the idea that only the God-Man can help us. And He has us as close as us reaching out our hand like Peter did when he was in the waves and sinking.

Feel the depth of this man's need today, and you will begin to amend in your heart a new way of life. We all have deep needs. We all are paralytics, of course. We are all blind to some extent, of course, and deaf, dumb, unable to proclaim the glory of God with great authority because we don't live in a glorious way.

So we have all those problems, of course. Only God can help us. That's what this healing teaches us today. Only God can help. And that's not a trite thing. That's something that must be felt in the absolute depths of your soul. Every bit of your being must feel that you have no way to do anything good or to have anything come out in a good way in your life without God. So you must have that feeling that you have no man to help you, except God.



And you also must fight that feeling when there are circumstances that look pretty bad. Maybe it's your long-standing bad habit of something, or maybe it's a bad relationship. Or someone who is not doing well that you love dearly and hasn't done well for a long time, it doesn't look like they are going to do better. Whatever it is. That thing that says to you, like in the Gospel when Jairus' daughter had died, a person came and said, don't trouble the Master any longer. That voice in you that says, it's not any good, it's not going to work, this isn't really going to change. We all have that, I know we do.

It's part of human nature. But you must fight against it by still going down to the Sheep's Pool and laying there even though you don't know how you're going to get in, by still remaining with the Apostles even though you don't believe in the Resurrection completely, and by still going to anoint a dead man even though all of your hope is lost because He's dead.

This is how we must live, and then God will fill us with everything. More than we can imagine. But we must feel the depth of this need, brothers and sisters; that's what this reading is telling us. Like I said, there's much of a theological nature in this story. It's very deep and important, and it kind of embellishes and deepens this basic understanding. But the basic thing you need to know is, you must feel your need and beg the Lord to help you because He is the only one that can. And He will. May God help us in all things, Amen.

Rev. Fr. Seraphim Holland

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

