

On Mid-Pentecost we hear the call of the Lord: 'whosoever thirsteth, let him come to Me and drink' (John 7:37). If this is so, then let us all run to Him. Whatever you thirst for - so long as it is not contrary to the spirit of the Lord - you will find relief in Him. If you thirst for knowledge, run to the Lord, for He is the one and only light, enlightening every man. If you thirst for cleansing from sin and quenching of the flames of your conscience, run to the Lord, for He tore asunder the handwriting of our sins upon the Cross. If you thirst for peace in your heart, run to the Lord, for He is the treasury of all good, Whose abundance will teach you to forget all deprivations and despise all earthly good, so as to be filled with Him alone. If you need strength, He is almighty. If you need glory, His glory surpasses the world. If you desire freedom, He gives true freedom. He will resolve all of our doubts, loose the bonds of our passions, dispel all our troubles and difficulties, will enable us to overcome all obstacles, temptations and intrigues of the enemy, and will make smooth the path of our spiritual life. Let us all run to the Lord!

Saint Theophan the Recluse

On Sunday 11 May 2014 is the Sunday of the Paralytic

Matins Gospel: Luke 24:13-35

Epistle: Acts 9:32-42

Gospel: John 5:1-15

Resurrectional Apolytikion:

Let everything in heaven rejoice, let everything on earth be glad, for the Lord has shown strength with His arm; by death He has trampled on death; He has become the first-born from the dead; from the belly of Hades He has delivered us, and granted the world His great mercy.

Kontakion for the Paralytic:

By your divine presence, Lord, raise my soul, grievously paralysed by sins of every kind and by unnatural deeds, as you raised the Paralytic of old, that saved I may cry to you: O merciful Christ, glory to your might.

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Readings and saints for this week:

Monday: Acts 10:1-16; John 6:56-69
Epiphanius, Bp. Of Cyprus; Germanos, Abp. Of Constantinople

Tuesday: Acts 10:21-33; John 7:1-13
Martyr Glyceria; Sergios the Confessor

Wednesday: Acts 14:6-18; John 7:14-30
Mid-Pentecost; Martyr Isidore; Hieromartyr Therapontus

Thursday: 10:34-43; John 8:12-20
Pachomius the Great; Achillius, Abp. Of Larissa

Friday: Acts 10:44-48; 11:1-10; John 8:21-30
Theodore the Sanctified; Martyr Peter of Blachernae

Saturday: 12:1-11; John 8:31-42
Andronicus & Junia; Nectarius of Meteora



Evangelion

A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith

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Our Need for Healing

Today, on the Sunday of the Paralytic, the Church commemorates the healing of the paralytic man by the pool of Bethesda. This paralysed man had been waiting for thirty-eight years to be healed. When Jesus saw him, He asked him whether he wanted to be healed and when the man replied that he had nobody to help him into the healing waters, Jesus Christ commanded him to get up, take up his bed, and walk.

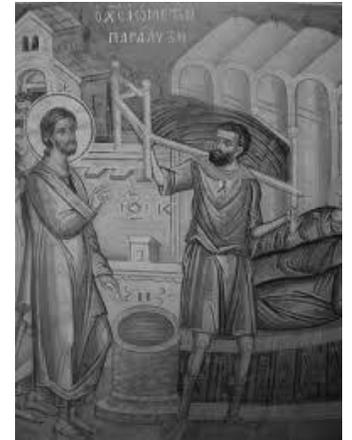
The Church gives us this account of one of the great healing miracles of the Lord in the Easter season in order to illustrate Christ's victory over sin and death. As Christians, we see the healing of the paralytic as a symbol of the renewal of the life of all humanity through the resurrection of Christ.

Today's Gospel is one of the few places where Jesus Christ makes a connection between sin and illness, when He tells the man who has been healed to "Sin no more." Not all illness is caused by sin, but we know that there can be a connection between spiritual illness and bodily illness, and it seems that this was the case here.

But, whether we are physically ill or not, we are all spiritually sick and this affects us in many ways that we may not even be conscious of. Sin is not so much the breaking of laws as a sickness that makes us unable of doing what we truly desire to do. It was to heal us of this sin that Jesus Christ took our reality on Himself in His death on the Cross, and, through His resurrection, opened for us the path to healing. That is why we can call out to Him "Heal my soul which has been ailing for many years as You healed the paralytic."

O Lord, the pool did not cure the Paralysed Man, but your word renewed him, nor did his sickness of so many years hinder it, for the force of your voice was shown to be sharper; and he cast off the weight so hard to carry and carried the burden of his bed as a witness to the multitude of your mercies; glory to you.

From Matins for the Sunday of the Paralytic



A Mercy of Peace, a Sacrifice of Praise

An introduction to the Divine Liturgy (continued)

Having completed the Holy Anaphora, or Offering, the Divine Liturgy proceeds with the litany that prepares us to pray the Lord's Prayer. Once again, we pray for God's help, protection, forgiveness and blessing on all of our lives. But we pray particularly for the precious Gifts that are set forth on the altar and which we are preparing to receive as the priest prays:

That our God, who loves mankind, having accepted them on His holy and immaterial Altar above the heavens, as a savour of spiritual fragrance, may send down upon us in return His divine grace and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Saint Gregory of Nyssa refers to Jesus Christ as "the myrrh of Divinity." Through His Incarnation of Christ, this myrrh has been poured out for our sakes, enabling us to partake of its fragrance. In the Divine Liturgy, Christ the Divine Myrrh is poured out for us as He invites us to participate in its fragrance.



But this participation is only possible in the unity of the Church. Before beginning this litany, we have already prayed:

...that with one voice and one heart we may glorify and praise your all-honoured and majestic name ...

And, at the end of this litany, the deacon prays:

Having asked for the unity of the faith and the communion of the Holy Spirit, let us entrust ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ our God.

We have already seen that we cannot celebrate the Divine Liturgy as isolated individuals, but only when united to the Body of Christ which is the Church. Saint Ignatius of Antioch

tells us that the only true Eucharist is the one that is celebrated in communion with the local bishop. This is not simply a formal requirement, but a real unity of mind and heart in a communion of genuine love. Saint Basil the Great writes:

Let us try to imitate the earliest Christian community, the way they had all things in common, their manner of life, their soul, the way they had concord of mind, a common table, inseparable brotherhood! What unfeigned love they had, making their several bodies appear as one and uniting their separate souls into one harmonious unity!



In the mercy of God, the little thing done with humility will enable us to be found in the same place as the saints who have laboured much and been true servants of God.

Saint Dorotheos of Gaza

The Feast of Mid-Pentecost

This coming Wednesday is the feast of Mid-Pentecost, where Christ "in the middle of the feast" teaches about His saving mission and offers to all "the waters of immortality."

This feast occurs halfway between Pascha and Pentecost and both recalls the joy of Easter and also anticipates the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, focusing us on the central themes of the entire period.

The Church gave us the first two Sundays after Pascha to remove any possible lingering doubts about the truth of the Resurrection in order that we can receive the living water that only the risen Lord can give. With the Sunday of the Paralytic we realize our need for healing, but are also introduced to the theme of water. Next week we find ourselves at Jacob's well with the Samaritan woman and finally at the pool of Siloam with the blind man.

During this period we hear about the "living water" that only the Lord Himself can give, and we learn that it is He Himself who is this Living Water, of which we partake through the baptismal waters and the Cup of Life. This anticipation reaches its fulfilment on the day of Pentecost when we hear the words: "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink."



At the midpoint of the Feast, O Saviour, water my thirsty soul with streams of true devotion. For you cried out to all: "Any who thirst, let them come to me, and let them drink!" O Source of life, Christ our God, glory to you!

Apolytikion for Mid-Pentecost

You were lifted up on the tree of the Cross and you lifted up the whole world with You; and among the dead as God you raise those who have been dead since time began.

Christ has risen as He said, having emptied the palaces of Hell, and He appears to the Apostles, giving them a share in the joy that lasts forever.

A snow-white, dazzling Angel appeared to the women saying, 'Do not weep. Our life has arisen, having given life to the dead in the graves'.

As you raised the Paralysed Man, O Christ, heal my soul crippled by transgressions, and lead me aright to walk in Your straight paths.

From Matins for the Sunday of the Paralytic