

ANNIVERSARY OR OUR DEPARTED FOR THIS SUNDAY

<u>DAY</u>	<u>NAME OF THE DEPARTED</u>	<u>ANNIVERSARY</u>
17	Claire Margaret Haddad	5
18	Robert Alexander Younes	7
19	Harry Daher	62
19	Virginia Curea	15
21	Camilia Elfar	9
22	Claire Tannous	19
23	Lurice Qaqish	15

- **Please**, pray for the health of the following parishioners: Ellen, Robert, Alex, Sam, Elias, Nassar, Valentine, George, Nina, Sonia, George, Elizabeth, Beshara, Samer, Irene, Nadia, Mona, Christine and Toni, George, Jacqueline and Helena. If you have any names of people who need prayers, email them to father.

ETERNAL LIGHT

- **May 23 – June 27:** in loving memory of **Georgette Fadel** from **Jocelyne Korkor & family**.
- **June 6:** in loving memory of **Ernest Younes** from **his family**.
- "Christ is Risen" from Pascha until Ascension we greet each other in person or in writing by Christ is Risen, Truly Risen.
- **2021 Graduates:** If you child is graduating high school or university, please send Amanda Qaqish directly his/her information with a picture. We need/her his name, school graduating from, degree and what will he/she be studying at the university. Email all information to orthodoxchristianeducation@gmail.com.

• **This Month activities:**

Tuesday May 25th Vespers for Mid-Pentecost at 7 PM

Wednesday May 26th Parish Council Meeting at 7 PM

Thursday May 27th Bible Study at 7 PM

Friday May 28th Engaged Meeting at 7 PM

Saturday May 29th Teens Talk at 1 PM

- **PLEDGE FORM 2021:** Please fill your pledge form if you have not done so as to allow us to budget for this year. **Please see attached form.**
- **Kindly Submit your Contribution through the Following Methods: Connect to the Church Website www.stgeorgeto.org Click on *Donate***
- **“e-transfer” info@stgeorgeantiochianchurch.org Account Name: St. George Church**

- **PayPal, or send your Cheque by Mail to: St. George Antiochian Church, 9116 Bayview Ave, Richmond Hill ON, L4B 3M9**
Good will come to those who are generous and lend freely, who conduct their affairs with justice. (Psalm 112:5)
- **Bookstore: New icons have just arrived in our bookstore. The Bookstore is located in the church's basement. Icons are great gifts for newborn, new home, your car or your children, and Christmas gifts. Please see Colette El-Hajj or Odette Boutros to see these new icons.**
- **Please, don't forget to send your sacrificial giving to your church of St. George via e-transfer, or you can still bring your envelope with you and place it in the box by the candles. Your sacrificial giving (financial donation/support) will keep our doors open.**
- **Canned Food Drive:** please bring non-perishable canned food to donate to the needy and place them in the box outside in the Narthex.
- **Online Sunday School has begun and is in full swing. You may still register your children at any time. For further assistance contact Amanda Qaqish at orthodoxchristianeducation@gmail.com.**

DIVINE LITURGY VARIABLES FOR SUNDAY, MAY 23, 2021
tone 3 / EOTHINON 5; FOURTH SUNDAY OF PASCHA
SUNDAY OF THE PARALYTIC

MICHAEL THE CONFESSOR, BISHOP OF SYNNADE; MYRRH-BEARER MARY, WIFE OF CLEOPAS; TRANSLATION OF THE
 RELICS OF LEONTIOS THE WONDERWORKER, BISHOP OF ROSTOV; EUPHROSINIA OF POLOTSK

NOTE TO CLERGY: Remember to include this special petition in the Great Litany before the one for the head of state, as directed by the Antiochian Archdiocese.

Deacon: For Metropolitan Paul, Archbishop John, and for their quick release from captivity and safe return, let us pray to the Lord.

الشماس: مِنْ أَجْلِ الْمَثْرُوبُولِيَّتِ بُوَيْسَ وَالْمَطْرَانَ
 يُوْحِنَّا وَفَكَ أَسْرِهِمَا وَعَوْدَتِهِمَا سَالِمَيْنِ، إِلَى الرَّبِّ
 نَطْلُبُ.

VARIOUS ARRANGEMENTS OF "CHRIST IS RISEN"

Arabic ([slow, chant](#)) // English ([slow, chant](#)) // English-Arabic-Greek ([quick, chant](#))
 English-Greek ([slow, choral](#)) // Arabic ([slow, choral](#))

- *The Priest begins Divine Liturgy with "Blessed is the Kingdom" and the choir responds "Amen." Bearing the Paschal Candle, the Priest then leads the singing of the Paschal Apolytikion and censes the west side of the Altar Table.*

Priest: Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down Death by death; and upon those in the tombs bestowing life!

- *The Choir then sings this twice, and the Liturgy continues with the Great Litany.*

THE FIRST ANTIPHON

Shout with joy to God, all the earth; sing to His Name, give glory to His praises.

Refrain: Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Savior, save us.

Say to God: How awesome are Thy works; let all the earth worship Thee, and sing to Thee. Let it sing a song to Thy Name, O Most High. (**Refrain**)

Glory... Both now... (**Refrain**)

هَلِّلُوا لِلَّهِ يَا جَمِيعَ الْأَرْضِ، رَتِّلُوا لِاسْمِهِ أَعْطُوا مَجْدًا
 لِتَسْبِيحَتِهِ.

اللازمة: بِشَفَاعَاتِ الْوَالِدَةِ الْإِلَهِيَّةِ، يَا مُخَلِّصُ خَلِّصْنَا.
 قُولُوا لِلَّهِ مَا أَرْهَبَ أَعْمَالِكَ، كُلُّ مَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ
 يَسْجُدُونَ لَكَ وَيُرْتَلُونَ لِاسْمِكَ أَيُّهَا الْعَلِيِّ. (اللازمة)
 الْمَجْدُ، الْآنَ وَكُلَّ أَوَانٍ (اللازمة)

THE SECOND ANTIPHON

May God have mercy upon us, and bless us, and may He cause His face to shine upon us, and have mercy upon us.

Refrain: Save us, O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead; who sing to Thee. Alleluia.

That Thy way may be known upon earth, Thy salvation among all nations; let the peoples give thanks to Thee, O God, let all the peoples give thanks to Thee. (**Refrain**)

لِيَتَرَأَفِ اللَّهُ عَلَيْنَا وَيُبَارِكُنَا، وَلِيُضِيءَ بَوَجْهِهِ عَلَيْنَا
 وَيَرْحَمَنَا.

اللازمة: خَلِّصْنَا يَا ابْنَ اللَّهِ، يَا مَنْ قَامَ مِنْ بَيْنِ
 الْأَمْوَاتِ، لِتُرْتَلَّ لَكَ. هَلِّلُوبِيَا.
 لِتُعْرَفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ طَرِيقُكَ وَفِي جَمِيعِ الْأُمَمِ
 خَلَاصُكَ. تَعْتَرِفُ لَكَ الشُّعُوبُ يَا اللَّهُ تَعْتَرِفُ لَكَ.
 (اللازمة)

May God bless us, and may all the ends of the earth fear Him. (<i>Refrain</i>) Glory... Both now... O, only begotten Son and Word of God...	لِيُبَارِكُنَا اللهُ إِلَهُنَا، وَلِتَرْهَبَهُ جَمِيعُ أَقَاصِي الْأَرْضِ. (اللازمة) الْمَجْدُ... الْآنَ وَكُلَّ أَوَانٍ ... يَا كَلِمَةَ اللهِ، الْإِئِنَّ الْوَحِيدِ...
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THE THIRD ANTIPHON

+ Let God arise, and let His enemies be scattered, and let them that hate Him flee from before His face. <i>Refrain</i> : Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death; and upon those in the tombs, bestowing life! + As smoke vanisheth, so let them vanish; as wax melteth before the fire. (<i>Refrain</i>) + So let sinners perish at the presence of God, and let the righteous be glad. (<i>Refrain</i>) + This is the day which the Lord hath made; let us rejoice and be glad therein. (<i>Refrain</i>)	+ لِيَقُمْ اللهُ وَيَتَبَدَّدَ جَمِيعُ أَعْدَائِهِ، وَيَهْرُبُ مُبْغِضُوهُ مِنْ أَمَامِ وَجْهِهِ. اللازمة: الْمَسِيحُ قَامَ مِنْ بَيْنِ الْأَمْوَاتِ، وَوَطِئَ الْمَوْتَ بِالْمَوْتِ، وَوَهَبَ الْحَيَاةَ لِلَّذِينَ فِي الْقُبُورِ. + كَمَا يُبَادُ الدُّخَانُ يُبَادُونَ، وَكَمَا يَذُوبُ الشَّمْعُ مِنْ أَمَامِ وَجْهِ النَّارِ. (اللازمة) + كَذَلِكَ تَهْلِكُ الْخَطَاةُ مِنْ أَمَامِ وَجْهِ اللهِ، وَالصَّادِقُونَ يَفْرَحُونَ وَيَتَهَلَّلُونَ أَمَامَ اللهِ، وَيَتَنَعَّمُونَ بِالسَّرُورِ. (اللازمة) + هَذَا هُوَ الْيَوْمُ الَّذِي صَنَعَهُ الرَّبُّ، لِنَفْرَحَ وَنَتَهَلَّلَ بِهِ. (اللازمة)
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THE EISODIKON (ENTRANCE HYMN) OF PASCHA

In the gathering places bless God the Lord, from the springs of Israel. Save us, O Son of God, Who art risen from the dead, who sing to Thee: Alleluia.	فِي الْمَجَامِعِ بَارِكُوا اللهُ، الرَّبَّ مِنْ يَنَابِيعِ إِسْرَائِيلَ، خَلِّصْنَا يَا ابْنَ اللهِ، يَا مَنْ قَامَ مِنْ بَيْنِ الْأَمْوَاتِ، لِنُرْتِّلَ لَكَ: هَلْلُويَا.
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RESURRECTIONAL APOLYTIKION IN TONE THREE

Let the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad, for the Lord hath done a mighty act with His own arm. He hath trampled down death by death, and become the first-born from the dead. He hath delivered us from the depths of Hades, granting the world the Great Mercy.	لِنَفْرَحِ السَّمَاوِيَّاتُ وَتَبْتَهِجِ الْأَرْضِيَّاتُ، لِأَنَّ الرَّبَّ صَنَعَ عِزًّا بِسَاعِدِهِ، وَوَطِئَ الْمَوْتَ بِالْمَوْتِ، وَصَارَ بَكْرَ الْأَمْوَاتِ، وَأَنْقَذَنَا مِنْ جَوْفِ الْجَحِيمِ، وَمَنَحَ الْعَالَمَ الرَّحْمَةَ الْعَظْمَى.
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- Now sing the apolytikion of the patron saint or feast of the temple.

KONTAKION OF PASCHA IN TONE EIGHT

Though Thou didst descend into the grave, O Immortal One, yet didst Thou destroy the power of Hades, and didst arise as victor, O Christ God, calling to the myrrh-bearing women, Rejoice, and giving peace unto Thine Apostles, O Thou Who dost grant resurrection to the fallen.	وَلَيْنَ كُنْتَ نَزَلْتَ إِلَى قَبْرِ يَا مَنْ لَا يَمُوتُ، إِلَّا أَنْتَ دَرَسْتَ قُوَّةَ الْجَحِيمِ، وَقُمْتَ غَالِباً أَيُّهَا الْمَسِيحُ إِلَهُ، وَلِلنِّسْوَةِ حَامِلَاتِ الطَّيِّبِ قُلْتَ "أَفْرَحْنَ"، وَلِرُسُلِكَ وَهَبْتَ السَّلَامَ، يَا مَانِحَ الْوَاقِعِينَ الْقِيَامِ.
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THE EPISTLE FOR PARALYTIC SUNDAY

*O chant unto our God, chant ye.
Clap your hands, all ye nations.*

The Reading from the Acts of the Holy Apostles. (9:32-42)

In those days, as Peter went throughout all regions, he came down also to the saints who dwelt at Lydda. There he found a certain man named Aeneas, who was bedridden for eight years and paralyzed. And Peter said to him: "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; arise and make your bed." And immediately he arose. And all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned back to the Lord. Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha (which means Gazelle). She was full of good works and of charitable deeds which she did. And it came to pass in those days that she fell sick and died; and when they had washed her, they placed her in an upper chamber. Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men to him entreating him: "Come to us without delay!" So Peter arose and went with them. And when he arrived, they took him into the upper chamber. All the widows stood by him weeping, showing the tunics and other garments which Tabitha made while she was with them. But Peter put them all outside and knelt down and prayed; then turning to the body, he said: "Tabitha, arise!" And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up. And he gave her his hand, and raised her up. Then he called the saints and widows and presented her alive. And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord.

رَتِّلُوا لِلَّهِنَا رَتِّلُوا. يَا جَمِيعَ الْأُمَمِ صَقِّقُوا بِالْأَيْدِي.
فَصَلِّ مِنْ أَعْمَالِ الرُّسُلِ الْقَدِيسِينَ الْأَطْهَارِ.
(42-32:9)

في تلك الأيام، فيما كان بطرس يطوف في جميع الأماكن، نزل أيضاً إلى القديسين الساكنين في لُدَّة. فوجد هناك إنساناً اسمه أينيّاس، مضطجماً على سريرٍ منذ ثمانين سنين، وهو مخلعٌ. فقال له بطرس: "يا أينيّاس، يشفيك يسوع المسيح؛ فم وافترش لنفسك." فقام للوقت. ورأه جميع الساكنين في لُدَّة وسارون فرجعوا إلى الرب. وكانت في يافا تلميذة اسمها طابيثا، الذي تفسيره طيبة، وكانت هذه ممتلئة أعمالاً صالحةً وصدقاتٍ كانت تعملها. فحدثت في تلك الأيام أنها مرضت وماتت. فغسلوها ووضعوها في العلية. وإذ كانت لُدَّة بقرب يافا، وسمع التلاميذ أن بطرس فيها، أرسلوا إليه رجلين يسألانه أن لا يبطن عن القدوم إليهم. فقام بطرس وأتى معهما. فلما وصل، صعدوا به إلى العلية، ووقف لديه جميع الأرامل يبكين، ويرينه أقمصةً وثياباً كانت تصنعها طيبة معهن. فأخرج بطرس الجميع خارجاً، وجثا على ركبتيه صلى. ثم انفتحت إلى الجسد وقال: "يا طابيثا قومي." ففتحت عينيها. ولما أبصرت بطرس جلست. فناولها يده وأنهضها. ثم دعا القديسين والأرامل، وأقامها لديهم حياةً. فشاع هذا الخبر في يافا كلها، فأمن كثيرون بالرب.

THE GOSPEL FOR PARALYTIC SUNDAY

The Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. John. (5:1-15)

At that time, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool,

فصلٌ شريفٌ من بشارة القديس يوحنا الإنجيلي
البشير والتلميذ الطاهر. (15-1:5)

in Hebrew called Bethesda, which has five porticoes. In these lay a multitude of invalids, blind, lame, paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool and troubled the water; whoever stepped in first, after the troubling of the water was healed of whatever disease he had. One man was there, who had been ill for 38 years. When Jesus saw him and knew that he had been lying there a long time, He said to him, "Do you want to be healed?" The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is troubled, and while I am going another steps down before me." Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your pallet, and walk." And at once the man was healed, and he took up his pallet and walked. Now that day was the Sabbath. So the Jews said to the man who was cured, "It is the Sabbath, it is not lawful for you to carry your pallet." But he answered them, "The man who healed me said to me, 'Take up your pallet, and walk.'" They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Take up your pallet, and walk'?" Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, as there was a crowd in the place. Afterward, Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, "See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse befalls you." The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus Who had healed him.

في ذلك الزمان، صعد يسوع إلى اورشليم. وإن في اورشليم عند باب الغنم بركة، تسمى بالعبرانية بيت حسدا، لها خمسة أزوقة. كان مضطجعا فيها جمهور كثير من المرضى من عميان وعرج ويابسي الأعضاء، ينتظرون تحريك الماء. لأن ملاكا كان ينزل أحيانا في البركة ويحرك الماء. والذي كان ينزل أولا من بعد تحريك الماء، كان يبرأ من أي مرض اعتره. وكان هناك إنسان به مرض منذ ثمان وثلاثين سنة. هذا إذ رآه يسوع ملقى، وعلم أن له زمانا كثيرا، قال له: "أتريد أن تبرأ؟" فأجابته المريض: "يا سيد، ليس لي إنسان متى حرك الماء يُقيني في البركة، بل بينما أكون آتيا، ينزل قبلي آخر." فقال له يسوع: "قم، احمِل سريرك وامش." فللوقت برى الرجل، وحمل سيره ومشى. وكان في ذلك اليوم سبت. فقال اليهود للذي شفي: "إنه سبت، فلا يحل لك أن تحمل السرير." فأجابهم: "إن الذي أبرأني هو قال لي 'احمل سريرك وامش.' فسألوه من هو الإنسان الذي قال لك 'احمل سريرك وامش'؟" أما الذي شفي فلم يكن يعلم من هو. لأن يسوع اعتزل، إذ كان في الموضع جمع. وبعد ذلك وجدته يسوع في الهيكل، فقال له: "ها قد عوفيت، فلا تعد تخطئ لئلا يصيبك شر." فذهب ذلك الإنسان، وأخبر اليهود أن يسوع هو الذي أبرأه.

MEGALYNARION FOR PARALYTIC SUNDAY IN TONE ONE

The angel spake to her that is full of grace, saying, O pure Virgin, rejoice; and I say also, Rejoice; for thy Son is risen from the tomb on the third day.

We believers in unison bless thee, O Virgin, crying: Rejoice, O gate of the Lord. Rejoice, O living city. Rejoice, O thou from whom didst rise upon us from the dead the Light of Resurrection, He Who was born of thee.

إن الملاك تقوه نحو المنعم عليها، أيتها العذراء النقية افرحي، وأقول أيضا افرحي، لأن ابنك قد قام من القبر في اليوم الثالث.

أيتها البتول، نعبطك نحن المؤمنين، بأصوات متفقة هاتين: افرحي يا باب الرب، افرحي يا مدينة متفلسة، افرحي يا من بها أشرق لنا اليوم،

مِنَ الْأَمْوَاتِ، نَوْرُ قِيَامَةِ الْمَوْلُودِ مِنْكَ.

KOINONIKON (COMMUNION HYMN) OF PASCHA IN TONE EIGHT

Receive ye the body of Christ; taste ye the Fountain of immortality.

جَسَدَ الْمَسِيحِ خُذُوا، وَالْيَتَبَوَّعَ الَّذِي لَا يَمُوتُ ذُوقُوا.

- Instead of "We have seen the true light," sing "Christ is Risen" ONCE.

THE GREAT DISMISSAL

Priest: May He Who rose from the dead, Christ our true God, through the intercessions of His all-immaculate and all-blameless holy Mother; by the might of the Precious and Life-giving Cross; by the protection of the honorable Bodiless Powers of Heaven; at the supplication of the honorable, glorious Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John; of the holy, glorious and all-laudable apostles; of our father among the saints, John Chrysostom, archbishop of Constantinople, whose Divine Liturgy we have now celebrated; of the holy, glorious and right-victorious Martyrs; of our venerable and God-bearing Fathers; of *Saint N., the patron and protector of this holy community*; of the holy and righteous ancestors of God, Joachim and Anna; Michael the Confessor, bishop of Synnada; Myrrh-bearer Mary, wife of Cleopas; translation of the relics of Leontios the wonderworker, bishop of Rostov; Euphrosinia of Polotsk, whose memory we celebrate today, and of all the saints: have mercy on us and save us, forasmuch as He is good and loveth mankind.

الكاهن: أَيُّهَا الْمَسِيحُ الْهَذَا الْحَقِيقِي، يَا مَنْ قَامَ مِنْ بَيْنِ الْأَمْوَاتِ، بِشَفَاعَاتِ أُمَّكَ الْكَلِيَّةِ الطَّهَارَةِ وَالْبَرِيَّةِ مِنْ كُلِّ عَيْبٍ؛ وَبِقُدْرَةِ الصَّلِيبِ الْكَرِيمِ الْمُخْيِي؛ وَبِطِبَابَاتِ الْقُوَّاتِ السَّمَاوِيَّةِ الْمُكْرَمَةِ الْعَادِمَةِ الْأَجْسَادِ؛ وَالنَّبِيِّ الْكَرِيمِ السَّابِقِ الْمَجِيدِ يُوْحَنَّا الْمَعْمَدَانِ؛ وَالْقَدِيسِينَ الْمُشْرَفِينَ الرُّسُلِ الْجَدِيرِينَ بِكُلِّ مَدِيحٍ؛ وَأَبِينَا الْجَلِيلِ فِي الْقَدِيسِينَ يُوحَنَّا الذَّهَبِيِّ الْفَمِّ رَئِيسِ أَسَاقِفَةِ الْقُسْطَنْطِينِيَّةِ، كَاتِبِ هَذِهِ الْخِدْمَةِ الشَّرِيفَةِ، وَالْقَدِيسِينَ الْمَجِيدِينَ الشُّهَدَاءِ الْمُتَأَلِّقِينَ بِالظَّفَرِ؛ وَأَبَائِنَا الْأَبْرَارِ الْمُتَوَشَّحِينَ بِاللَّهِ؛ وَالْقَدِيسِ (ة) (فُلَانِ، فُلَانَةِ) شَفِيعِ (ة) وَحَامِي (ة) هَذِهِ الرَّعِيَّةِ الْمُقَدَّسَةِ؛ وَالْقَدِيسِينَ الصِّدِّيقِينَ جَدِّي الْمَسِيحِ الْإِلَهِيِّ، يُوَاكِمِ وَحَنَّةً؛ مِيخَائِيلِ الْمُعْتَرَفِ أُسْقَفِ سِينَادَا، مَرْيَمِ زَوْجَةِ كَلِيُوبَا حَامِلَةِ الطَّيِّبِ، لِيُونْتِيُوسِ الصَّانِعِ الْعَجَائِبِ أُسْقَفِ رُوسْتُوفِ، إِفْرُوسِينِيَا مِنْ بُولُوْتْسُوكِ، الَّذِينَ نُقِيمُ تَذَكَارَهُمَا الْيَوْمَ، وَجَمِيعِ قَدِيسِيكَ، إِرْحَمْنَا وَخَلِّصْنَا بِمَا أَتَىكَ صَالِحٌ وَمُحِبٌّ لِلْبَشَرِ.

Priest: Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down Death by death, and upon those in the tombs...

الكاهن: الْمَسِيحُ قَامَ مِنْ بَيْنِ الْأَمْوَاتِ، وَوَطِئَ الْمَوْتَ بِالْمَوْتِ، وَوَهَبَ الْحَيَاةَ...

People: ...bestowing life!

الجوقة: ... لِلَّذِينَ فِي الْقُبُورِ.

- NOTE: This ending for the remainder of Bright Season matches what is correctly provided in the *Liturgikon* (third edition, p. 14).

These texts have been prepared by the Department of Liturgics of the Antiochian Archdiocese. Portions of the Archdiocesan Service Texts include texts from The Menaion, The Great Horologion, The Pentecostarion, The Octoechos, and The Psalter of the Seventy, which are Copyright © Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Brookline, Massachusetts, and are used with permission. All rights reserved. These works may not be further reproduced, beyond printing out a single copy for personal non-commercial use, without the prior written authorization of Holy Transfiguration Monastery.

Healed to Rise Up and Walk: Homily for the Sunday of the Paralytic in the Orthodox Church [Fr. Philip LeMasters](#)



Acts 9:32-42; John 5:1-15

Christ is Risen!

We do not like to be dragged down or held back by problems that we cannot solve. Whether it is our own health, a broken relationship with others, or a complex set of circumstances over which we have little control, it is very frustrating to know our weakness before seemingly insurmountable challenges.

That is surely how the invalids, blind, lame, and paralyzed felt as they waited for the chance to be healed by being the first to reach the pool of water troubled by the angel. Due to their illnesses, many must have despaired over ever being healed. The man who had been paralyzed for 38 years was one of those, for there was no one to help him move toward the water. Here we have an image of humanity before the coming of Christ. The Jews had a Temple in which animals were sacrificed, and the pool provided water for washing lambs before they were offered to God. This scene occurs at the Jewish feast of Pentecost, which commemorated Moses receiving the Law, which was given by angels.

Fallen humanity, however, remained spiritually weak and sick. They lacked the strength to fulfill God's requirements, and certainly could not conquer death, the wages of sin for all those who have fallen short of the glory of God. The sacrificial system of the Temple foreshadowed the great Self-Offering of our Lord on the Cross, but did not heal anyone from the ravages of spiritual corruption or raise anyone from the grave. It was a great blessing for the Jews to have the Law, but surely also a tremendous frustration not to have the strength to obey it fully. Only Christ Himself fulfilled the Law, which is why He can call and empower us to be perfect as our Heavenly Father is perfect. (Matt. 5:48)

In contrast, the paralyzed man represents all who lack the power to move themselves to complete healing, to find the fulfillment of our common human calling to become like God in holiness. Notice that he did not call out to Christ to help him; instead, the Lord reached out to him, asking

“Do you want to be healed?” That may seem like a strange question, for presumably anyone waiting by a pool for healing after 38 years of illness would want to be made well. But think for a moment about how we have all learned to adapt to our favorite sins, how we have become comfortable with whatever forms of corruption have become second nature to us over the years. By virtue of coming to Church, we are apparently religious people, but that does not mean that we truly want to be healed. For to be healed means obeying the Lord’s command to this fellow: “Rise, take up your pallet, and walk.” It requires making the effort to rise up in obedience, to be transformed personally in how we live each day, and to grow in holiness.

It would not have sufficed for that man to have remained on his bed and have warm feelings about how Christ had healed him. Just as anyone who lies motionless for a long time will become weak and unable to rise up and walk on his own power, the same will be true of us spiritually if we try to rest content with simply believing ideas about God or having positive emotions about Him. If we are not gaining strength by actually serving Him faithfully, we will become paralyzed and unable to cooperate with our Lord’s gracious healing energies. Any spiritual health that we claim in that state will be a figment of our imagination.

The good news is that the Lord does not simply provide us with a set of rules to follow or services to perform. He makes us participants in Himself by grace. He unites us to Himself, raising us up with Him from slavery to sin and death to the great dignity of those who share in His eternal life. The Savior makes us members of His own Body, the Church. He is the Bridegroom and we are the Bride. He makes us radiant in holiness, like an iron left in the fire of the divine glory. That is how He heals us such that we have the strength to obey His command to get up from our bed of corruption and move forward in a blessed life of holiness.

Though we may not yet have the eyes to see it, this healing and strengthening of our humanity happens to this day through our life in the Church. In our reading from Acts, St. Peter heals a paralyzed man and commands him to get up. He even raises a woman from death. Peter did not do this by his own power or authority, but because the Lord was working through him. He said to the paralyzed man, “Jesus Christ heals you...” Throughout Acts, we read of how the Lord works through His Body, the Church, to enable people to participate personally in the new life of the resurrection that He shares with us by grace.

That is not, however, a life of merely having our names on a church membership roll or of calling ourselves Orthodox Christians. If our faithfulness extends only that far, we will become as weak as a person who remains immobile in bed and refuses to stand up and walk. We must not be like those poor souls waiting by the pool for someone else to move them into the healing water. On

His own gracious initiative, Jesus Christ has given each of us the strength to overcome the paralysis of sin through His resurrection. He does not simply give us commands; He gives us Himself. And our life in His Body, the Church is truly our participation in Him.

We receive His healing of our souls when we humbly repent of our sins in Confession. We are nourished for the life of the Kingdom by His Body and Blood in Holy Communion. When we offer our time, energy, and resources to support the ministries of the Church, we rise up from selfishness to participate in the abundant generosity of the Lord. When we stop thinking of ourselves as isolated individuals and instead as members of a Body with a common life in Christ, we will be able to love and serve one another in ways that will open us to His strength personally and collectively in powerful ways.

In the joy of the resurrection, we must learn to see that embracing our life together in Christ is an essential dimension of obeying His command to “Rise, take up your pallet, and walk.” He calls each of us to turn away from the paralyzing weakness of selfishness and laziness that would make whatever sins we have become comfortable with appear more important than serving Him in His Body, the Church, where the glory and power of the resurrection are fully present.

Think about that for a moment. Pascha is not an isolated event that happened long ago, but an entrance into the new day of the Kingdom of Heaven which is fully open to us in the worship and common life of this parish. The Savior calls each of us, weakened and held back by the corruptions of sin, to get up and move forward in the blessed life for which He made us in His image and likeness. That is why He died and rose again, to raise us up with Him for a life of holiness, to restore us to the ancient dignity of Paradise. May this season of Pascha be our entrance as a parish into the joy of the Kingdom. That will happen when we rise up, from whatever corruptions are holding us back, to a life of obedience in serving Him and one another in His Body, the Church. That is the only way to answer the question that He asks each of us today and every day: “Do you want to be healed?”