



PARISH INFORMATION BULLETIN

PROGRAM FOR 29 APRIL—5 MAY 2018

CHRISTOS ANESTI ! CHRIST IS ARISEN !

**SUNDAY
29 APRIL**

Sunday of The Paralytic, John 5: 1-15

- **7.30– 11.00am**
Orthros and Divine Liturgy

***** SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES FOR ALL AGES *****

(A free voluntary program organised by the Church)

Immediately after Holy Communion until Church dismissal, in the building behind the Church, Religious Instruction lessons take place for our children. We have classes for ages ranging from 5yrs to teenage years and are given in a relaxed, friendly environment. The understanding of our faith through the religious instruction lessons bring our children closer to God and the joy of peace of His Love.

**MONDAY
30 APRIL**

- **9.00am**
Service of Holy Unction
- **10.00am**
Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall.

**TUESDAY
1 MAY**

- **7.00pm**
Parishes of St Vasilios and the Presentation of our Lord, Coburg Youth Group will meet in our Church Hall. The meeting will begin with the Compline Service in English.
- **7.30pm**
Young Adults and Married Couples Bible Study Group at St. Vasilios, in the Church Coffee Room.

**WEDNESDAY
2 MAY**

MID-PENTECOST

- **7.00—9.30am**
Orthros and Divine Liturgy
- **5.00pm**
Paraklesis to the Theotokos followed by Bible Study

**SATURDAY
5 MAY**

St Irene, Great-Martyr

- **7.00—9.30am**
Orthros and Divine Liturgy
- **3.45pm**
Service of Vespers

**SUNDAY
6 MAY**

GOSPEL READING: John 4: 5-42
EPISTLE READING: Acts 11: 19-30



Telephone Contact Numbers

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Fr Athanasios and
Fr Ephraim
are available at the Church
every Monday to Friday
between 4.00 and 6.00pm
for Holy Confession and
any spiritual need.

"The whole earth is a
living icon of the face
of God."

- St. Anthony the
Great

VOICE OF THE CHURCH FATHERS

Saint Peter the Damascene writes:

"We all receive God's blessings equally. But some of us, receiving God's fire, that is, His word, become soft like beeswax, while the others like clay become hard as stone. And if we do not want Him, He does not force any of us, but like the sun He sends His rays and illuminates the whole world, and he who wants to see Him, sees Him, whereas the one who does not want to see Him, is not forced by Him. And no one is responsible for this privation of light except the one who does not want to have it.

God created the sun and the eye. Man is free to receive the sun's light or not. The same is true here. God sends the light of knowledge like rays to all, but He also gave us faith like an eye. The one who wants to receive knowledge through faith, keeps it by his works, and so God gives him more willingness, knowledge, and power."

SUNDAY OF THE PARALYTIC—John 5: 1-15

Christ is Risen!

On this fourth Sunday of the season of Pascha, we remember Jesus Christ's healing of the paralytic, the paralyzed man who had not been able to move for 38 years, probably his entire life. He had seen others healed miraculously in a nearby pool of water, but he had no one to help him get there when the angel stirred the water. So he was stuck, unable to move, unable to heal himself, and unable to receive God's blessing.

This event occurred during the Jewish feast of Pentecost, which commemorated the giving of the law through Moses. The Lord Jesus saw this poor man, lying near one of the gates to the temple area, and He simply asked him if he wanted to be healed. When the man explained that he had no one to help him into the healing pool, Christ said, "Rise, take up your bed and walk" and he did so. This healing occurred on the Sabbath day, when the Old Testament law indicated that no work was to be done, so some of the Jews criticized the man for walking around carrying his bed on that day.

In response to their questions, we find out that this man did not even know Jesus Christ's name; he could not identify the One who healed him. But then the Lord found him and said, "See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you."

During this season of Pascha, when we remember Christ's victory over death and sin, we want to become like this man who took up his bed and walked, who entered into a new life made possible by the mercy of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ. We want to participate in the blessing that Christ's resurrection has brought to the world and to be transformed and healed by it. For like this man, we are too often paralyzed when we face difficult and painful life circumstances before which we feel powerless. We cannot snap our fingers and change our world, other people, or even ourselves. We cannot raise the dead, heal diseases, or otherwise make our problems go away. We are weakened by our habitual sins, our passions, or disordered desires and habits that keep us from experiencing the joy, peace, and freedom of life eternal.

Like this poor man, we have a law, a set of religious commands, but we often lack the strength to move ourselves to obey them. Sometimes we have carried burdens in our souls for thirty-eight years or longer; perhaps we cannot even imagine ourselves without anger, hatred, greed, lust, pride, self-righteous judgment, sloth or other sins that we know all too well. How often have we said, "I won't act that way anymore. I won't do this, I won't say that, I won't think this way. I won't treat him or her as I have before." But all too often, we lack the strength to change; the disappointing truth is that we are paralyzed by our sins and weakened by a lifetime of giving in to temptation. We may even have accepted the excuse that that is simply who we are and there is no point in even trying to change.

The good news of Pascha, however, is that the Risen Lord calls every single one of us to "Rise, take up your bed and walk." His blessing is not for a select few, but for the whole world: all the living and the dead. The Lord has mercy on those who do not even know His name, like the paralyzed man. He asks only whether we want to be healed, for He never forces us. And to those who will accept His mercy, the Lord promises the strength to rise, take up our beds and walk; in other words, He enables us to live a new life.

We have to be ready, however, to carry our beds even on the Sabbath day, for reminders of our sins, weaknesses, and of the imperfection of the world will still be with us. Very often these are our own thoughts to which we pay too much attention; for we find it impossible to believe that we really have been forgiven, that what is done is done, that the Lord's mercy has brought us into a new way of living. How often we carry a burden of guilt and fear that paralyzes us, that freezes us in the past and makes us think that we are fooling ourselves to imagine that Christ's victory is also ours. And how often we become obsessed with whatever challenges and difficulties we face, blowing them out of proportion until we think that they are even more powerful and real than the Lord Who has conquered sin and death.

Yes, the formerly paralyzed man had to carry his bed, the reminder of his illness; but the miracle was that he could actually do that: he had the strength to stand up, walk, and carry something. And we are all given the ability in Jesus Christ to make progress in our lives, to become more like God, to grow in holy joy by using even our most difficult struggles as opportunities to trust more fully in the Lord, to take up our crosses, be purified of our passions, and to shine more brightly with the light of Christ.

Through our Savior's cross, joy has come into the all the world. And it is through our patient, faithful endurance of whatever trials, tribulations, and temptations we face that we will open ourselves to the joy, to the strength, to the life that has conquered even death itself.

We cannot triumph over all our troubles by sheer will power, but we can do what we can do. Each day, each moment, each hour, we can walk as best we can in the right direction—in other words, we can refuse to lie down again in our bed of weakness and despair. We can do our best to pay no attention to negative and unhealthy thoughts; we can treat others as we would have them treat us; we can keep our mouths shut when we are tempted to judge or condemn others; we can focus our energies on changing what we can change in our lives and relationships—and leave the rest in God's hands. In other words, we should not think we are either totally paralyzed or completely healthy. We are somewhere in between, and the same Lord who conquered death itself constantly invites and enables us to greater strength and wholeness, to the joy of those who know that they really can move—step by step—more fully into the brilliant light of the Kingdom.

Fortunately, we do not have to wrestle with these problems as isolated individuals. We are blessed to participate in the life of Christ as members of His Body, the Church. And in the sacrament of confession, we are assured of God's forgiveness and exhorted to give no further care to the sins which we have confessed. The paralyzing burden of our sins is lifted at confession; no, that does not mean that we are never tempted again or that we do not have to live with the consequences of our actions, but it does mean we hear the voice of Christ and feel the touch of His hand as He says, "Rise, take up your bed and walk." The sins which you have confessed are behind you. Do not return to them. Go forward with your life to the glory of God. Go and sin no more.

The point here is not legalism, but healing. For if we really want to be made well, we must open the paralysis of our souls on a regular basis to Christ the Great Physician, Who is present to us in His Body, the Church. And every time that we take confession, Christ in effect says to us, "See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you."

No one forces us to sin or to cower in fear before the difficult challenges of life; but it seems inevitable that we will at times be overcome by our passions and our problems. We are often like someone healed of paralysis who cannot escape the habit of staying in bed or cope very well with the challenges and struggles of his new life. So we lie down again in our bed of habitual sins and weaknesses. But fortunately for us, the Lord is merciful. He always asks us, "Do you want to be healed?" And if we respond with truthfulness and humility, He has compassion on us, and assures us of His forgiveness and strength.

So we rise, take up our bed, and walk. We may fall back into our paralysis, weakness, and fears more times than we can count. We may fall down ten thousand times, but Christ is always there to raise us up and give us a share in His eternal life. We probably do not see it in our own lives, but through this journey of humble repentance we do find healing. The course of our struggle is upward; the paralysis decreases; our souls are strengthened as we struggle to press forward in faithfulness; the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.

And this is a vital part of the good news of Pascha. Despite the setbacks, despite the temptations, despite the burdens and obstacles that we and others place on our path, the glorious new day of God's kingdom has dawned. Christ has raised all humanity, including us, from sin and death. No, our sharing in Christ's salvation is not something magical that happens in an instant; like everything in creation, it takes time. And that is not because of God, but because of us.

So let us not only say "Christ is Risen!" this Paschal season; let us rise with Him, getting up from whatever sins have weighed us down, finding the strength in His resurrection to overcome our paralysis and weakness, to refuse to be shackled by fear, and move step by step, day by day, into the joy of His Kingdom. Now is the time to take up our beds and walk in the brilliant light of the empty tomb, for Christ is Risen!

Fr. Philip LeMasters