



PARISH INFORMATION BULLETIN

PROGRAM FOR 19—25 MAY 2019

CHRISTOS ANESTI! CHRIST IS ARISEN!	
SUNDAY 19 MAY	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) Lessons take place in the building behind the church and begin at the time of Holy Communion until Church dismissal. We have classes for ages ranging from 5yrs to teenage years. Lessons are taught in a relaxed, friendly environment. Please bring your children along to learn of their rich Orthodox faith and come close to God and His Love.	
MONDAY 20 MAY	• 9.00am Service of Holy Unction • 10.00am Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall.
TUESDAY 21 MAY Saints Constantine and Helen	• 7.00am Orthros and Divine Liturgy • 7.00pm Parishes of St Vasilios and the Presentation of our Lord Youth Group will meet in our Church Hall.
WEDNESDAY 22 MAY MID-PENTECOST	• 7.00am Orthros and Divine Liturgy • 5.00pm Paraklesis to the Theotokos followed by Bible Study
THURSDAY 23 MAY	• 7.30—8.30pm ⇒ TEENAGE YOUTH GROUP (Ages 13-19) In Church Hall, upstairs behind the Church <i>*ALL TEENAGERS WELCOME</i>
SATURDAY 25 MAY	• 3.45pm Service of Vespers
SUNDAY 26 MAY	GOSPEL READING: JOHN 5: 1-15 EPISTLE READING: Acts 9: 32-42



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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.

Always have the fear
of God in your heart,
and remember that
God is always with
you, everywhere,
whether you are
walking or sitting.

St. Gennadius of
Constantinople

VOICE OF THE CHURCH FATHERS

Brothers and Sisters! The all-merciful God desires happiness for us both in this life
and in the life to come.

To this end He established His Holy Church, so that she might cleanse us from sin, sanctify us,
reconcile us with Him and give us a heavenly blessing.

The embrace of the Church is always open to us.

Let us all hasten their more quickly, we whose consciences are burdened.

Let us hasten, and the Church will lift the weight of our burdens, give us boldness before God, and fill
our hearts with happiness and blessedness.

St. Nectarios of Aegina, *The Path to Happiness*, 1

Healed to Rise Up and Walk: Homily for the Sunday of the Paralytic, 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 Saviour 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 Saviour 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?"

Christ is Risen!

Fr. Philip LeMasters