



Parish Information Bulletin

Program for 15—21 May 2022

CHRISTOS ANESTI ! CHRIST IS ARISEN!

SUNDAY 15 MAY

SUNDAY OF THE PARALYTIC, John 5: 1-15

- 7.30am
Orthros and Divine Liturgy

2022 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 10.30am 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 16 MAY

- 10.00am
Meeting of Elderly Citizens in Church Hall

WEDNESDAY 18 MAY

Mid-Pentecost

- 7.30am
Orthros and Divine Liturgy

- 8.00—9.00pm

TEENAGE YOUTH GROUP

ALL TEENAGERS WELCOME

Join the group and learn about your faith, make friends,
enjoy refreshments, in a friendly, relaxing environment.

- In Church Hall, upstairs behind the Church

SATURDAY 21 MAY

Saints Constantine and Helen

- 7.30am
Orthros and Divine Liturgy

SUNDAY 22 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.

Mid-Feast of Pentecost

As the name implies, the Mid-Feast of Pentecost occurs on a Wednesday half way between Pascha and Pentecost. The Gospel Lesson is John 7:14-30 which begins with the words:

About the middle of the festival Jesus went up into the temple and began to teach.

This Feast is a reminder to us that we are still celebrating Pascha, the Resurrection of Christ, and are already preparing for the Feast of Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit. In our minds already Pascha may be so yesterday – an after-glow in the rear view mirror of our memories. However, in our life in the Church it is central to our daily being as Christians: it should not be so readily or easily consigned to the past. Our salvation, our experience of God, our opportunity for eternal life is found in the events of Pascha and Pentecost and their being a part of our spiritual memory – something we live today in expectation of that day which will never end.

- Fr Ted Bobosh

SUNDAY OF THE PARALYTIC, John 5: 1-15

Wanting to Be Healed Is Not Always Easy

Christ is Risen!

On the last two Sundays, the Church called us to focus on how particular people responded to our Lord's death and resurrection. Thomas did not believe until he saw and touched the wounds of the Risen Saviour. Joseph of Arimathea took Christ's body down from the Cross and, with the help of Nicodemus, buried Him. The Myrrh-Bearing women went to the tomb very early in the morning in order to anoint their dead Lord as a final sign of love for Him. That is how they became the first witnesses to His resurrection.

As we continue to celebrate Christ's glorious rising on the third day, the Church directs us to a very different event on this Sunday of the Paralytic: The Saviour's healing of a man who had been paralysed for thirty-eight years. The man, whose name we do not know, was in the pathetic situation of being right by a pool of water where he could be

healed, but due to his paralysis he was unable to enter it before someone else received the miracle. It may be hard for us to understand what this man's circumstances and healing have to do with celebrating Pascha.

A key point to keep in mind is that the Saviour died and rose up in order to heal fallen humanity, spiritually weak, sick, and enslaved ultimately to death. In such a corrupt state, we lacked the strength to fulfil our calling to become like God in holiness, and certainly could not overcome the ultimate paralysis of the grave. The man in our gospel lesson was near the Temple in Jerusalem, for the pool provided water for washing lambs before they were slaughtered. The scene occurs at the Jewish feast of Pentecost, which commemorated Moses receiving the Law, which had been given by angels. Both the Old Testament Law and the sacrificial worship of the Temple foreshadowed the coming of Christ, but they lacked the power to heal the soul from the ravages of sin, including bondage to the grave. He fulfilled them both as the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world. Our Great High Priest offered Himself on the Cross as He entered fully into death itself, from which He liberated us by His resurrection to become "partakers of the divine nature" by grace. He did so purely out of love for paralysed humanity in order to restore and fulfil us in God's image and likeness.

The paralysed man embodies our common human condition. Even as those enslaved to the fear of death did not somehow take the initiative in bringing salvation to the world, this fellow did not call out to Christ to help him or even know the Saviour's name. Instead, the Lord graciously reached out to him, asking the seemingly obvious question, "Do you want to be healed?" The Saviour's words actually call us all into question because it is so easy to embrace our distorted desires and adapt to our habitual sins to the point that they become second nature to us. We may even decide that being true to ourselves means denying that we need healing at all. Some today seem to do this in their pride about hating those they consider their enemies for political, cultural, or racial reasons. Some think it is virtuous to be enslaved by the love of money and the praise of other people, and consequently hold their needy and humble neighbours in disdain. Some have given their hearts to habitual indulgence in everything from gossip to self-righteous judgment to sexual intimacy apart from the blessed marital union of husband and wife. In one way or another, we all have various maladies that root so deeply within our souls that it often seems much easier simply to define ourselves in terms of them than to take the steps necessary for our healing.

In order to accept His transformative mercy, we must refuse to identify ourselves in terms of our passions and instead struggle to obey the Lord's command: "Rise, take up your pallet, and walk." No matter how great the struggle, we must rise up in obedience in order to participate personally in the Saviour's liberation of the human person from the paralysis of sin and death. He does not force us to do so, however, and embracing His healing will never be as easy as lying comfortably in bed or resting content with whatever forms of corruption we find most appealing.

The man in today's gospel reading would never have been able to walk had he insisted on remaining as he had been for thirty-eight years. Lying still for a long time makes people weak and unable to move on their own. The same will be true of us spiritually if we do not undertake the struggle to cooperate with the mercy of the Lord by serving Him as faithfully as we presently have the strength to do. The more accustomed we become to any sin, and especially the more we accept the lie that embracing that sin is somehow part of becoming our true selves, the weaker we will become before it. The longer we insist on remaining enslaved to our passions, the less inclination we will have to receive the liberation that the Saviour died and rose again to bring to the world.

As many of us know from physical therapy and other forms of bodily discipline for our health, strengthening and stretching weak muscles makes them tired and sore and tempts us to give up. The problem is that doing so guarantees that we will remain weak. In order to attain the strength and function that we want, we simply have to push the limits of our weakness. That is true both physically and spiritually. After a lifetime of not moving, the paralysed man could not have found it easy to obey Christ's command to stand, pick up his bed, and walk. He had learned how to survive as an invalid, but now the Saviour was directing him to a very different life, the challenges of which he could not know or predict. At some level, he must have struggled with fear about what would lie ahead.

We will probably feel the same way whenever we gain the clarity to see some dimension of our broken spiritual state more clearly. The more we embrace Christ's healing, the more we will be aware of the ongoing paralysis of our own souls. The Lord does not say to us only once to rise up from sin and move forward in a life of holiness. He commands us to do so every day of our lives, calling us to enter evermore fully into the infinite joy of the heavenly kingdom opened to us through His glorious resurrection. As the God-Man, He Himself is the healing, restoration, and fulfilment of the human person. Entrusting ourselves to the Saviour requires that we refuse to live like those who hope for nothing beyond the grave and, therefore, will embrace any appealing distraction from despair about the ultimate pointlessness of their existence.

By His resurrection, Christ frees us from anxiety fuelled by the fear of death and calls us to the hard work of reorienting our lives each day to share more fully in the joy of His salvation. We must lay aside all the distractions and excuses from doing so that we receive from our own thoughts and inclinations, and also from many voices across the ideological spectrum in our culture. We must mindfully cultivate a settled desire to be healed of all that corrupts our souls even as we continue taking the necessary steps of obedience, as difficult as they may be. We must not rest content with our present level of spiritual health, but must continually push ourselves forward as we turn our attention away from anything that would hold us back.

In order to celebrate Pascha, we must participate personally in the Lord's victory over the corrupting power of death and sin by actually obeying Him. By His resurrection, the Saviour has enabled us all to rise up from our beds of sin and bear witness that something radically new has come into the world through the Cross and empty tomb. All that we must do is to take the steps we can to embrace the life of our Risen Lord through obedience. That is how we will come to know our weakness and open ourselves to receive His strength, which we can never earn or deserve. That is how we will enter more fully into the great joy of this season, for "Christ is Risen!"

- Fr. Philip LeMasters