



SAINT ANTHONY ORTHODOX CHURCH

Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese
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FOURTH PASCHAL SUNDAY

("Sunday of the Paralytic")

10 May 2020

TONE 3— *Apostle Simeon the Zealot (1st c.). Martyrs Philadelphus, Cyprian, Alphius, Onesimus, Erasmus, and 14 others, in Sicily (3rd c.). Martyr Hesychius of Antioch (4th c.). Bl. Isidora the Fool, of Tabenna in Egypt (4th c.). Bl. Thais (Taisia) of Egypt (5th c.).*

FIRST ANTIPHON

Shout with joy to God, all the earth; sing to His Name, give glory to His praises. *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. (R.:)

Glory ... Now and ever ... (R.:)

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. *Save us, O Son of God, who art risen from the dead, as we chant to Thee, Alleluia!* That Thy way may be known on earth, Thy salvation among all nations. Let the people give thanks to Thee, O God, let all peoples give thanks to Thee. (R.:) *Glory... Now and ever... (Only begotten Son ...)*

THIRD ANTIPHON

Christ is risen ... with the following verses:

- Let God arise, and let His enemies be scattered, let those who hate Him flee from before His face.
- As smoke vanishes, so let them vanish; as wax melts before the fire, so let sinners perish before the Face of God; but let the righteous be glad.
- This is the day which the Lord hath made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

LITTLE ENTRANCE

In the churches bless God the Lord from the springs of Israel. Save us, O Son of God, who art risen from the dead, as we chant to Thee, Alleluia!

TROPARION OF RESURRECTION (Tone 3): Let the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad, for the Lord hath done a mighty act with His own arm: He has trampled down death by death and become the first born from the dead, He has delivered us from the depths of hell, granting the world great mercy.

TROPARION OF ANTHONY THE GREAT: Like the zealous Elijah thou didst become, and followed John the Baptist in his upright ways. A dweller in the wilderness, thou didst steady the world by prayer. O Father Anthony, intercede with Christ our God for our souls' salvation.

KONTAKION FOR THE SUNDAY OF THE PARALYTIC (Tone 3): By Thy divine intercession, O Lord, as Thou didst raise up the paralytic of old, so also raise up my soul paralyzed by sins and thoughtless acts; so that being saved I may sing to Thee: Glory to Thy majesty, O gracious Christ!

KONTAKION OF PASCHA (Tone 8): O Christ God, though Thou didst descend into the grave, yet didst Thou overthrow the power of Hades, and rise as an Immortal Conqueror. Thou didst greet the myrrh-bearing women with joy, and to Thine Apostles Thou didst send Thy peace, and to the fallen O Lord, Thou didst bring resurrection.

TODAY'S APOSTLE READING

Prokeimenon: Chant unto our God, clap your hands, all ye nations!

The Reading is from the Acts of the Apostles

(Acts 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.

"Like father, like son" says the proverb. This applies also to the relationship between teachers and pupils, or masters of any craft and their disciples. The Lord himself said "A disciple is not above his master: but every disciple that is fully trained shall be as his master" (Lk 6:40). It is not surprising, then, that the Acts of the Apostles show precisely how the disciples act in ways that mirror those of the Master. Today, when we remember the healing of the paralytic, we also hear about two astounding miracles of Saint Peter: the healing of a paralytic and the raising from the dead of a young woman.

Where does this reading place us, who are also called to be disciples of Christ and followers of his apostles? The man who had been paralyzed for thirty-eight years regains his health when the Lord Jesus commands him, "Rise, take your pallet and walk!" The Apostle Peter, by contrast, calls out to Aeneas, paralyzed for eight years: "Aeneas, *Jesus Christ* heals you: arise and make your bed!" Note that the Apostle does not work a miracle with "powers" of his own, but extends to Aeneas the healing that comes from Christ. So, the first thing to bear in mind is that the Church has no power and authority other than that of Christ; whenever Christians become intoxicated with "power" of a

social, political, financial, economic type, they need to repent and remember that we are called to be not ourselves but the body of Christ, extensions of Christ into this world.

How should we strive towards the heights of holiness we see in the holy apostle Peter and in all the saints of the Church? *Humility*: this would be their first advice; that is, stop comparing yourself to the saints, and stop daydreaming about great feats of holiness. None of those whom we know to be saints of the Church ever dreamed of “becoming a saint,” or “mastering the art” of healing paralytics or raising the dead. The Church is not a school of witchcraft and wizardry, but the gathering of those who wish to become sober. “The Son of God came into this world to save sinners, *of whom I am first*”: this confession that Saint Paul gave to his disciple, Saint Timothy (1 Tim 1:15), which we also repeat at each Divine Liturgy, is our first step to sobriety, the first step out of the satanic intoxication with self-conceit, the first step to being a disciple of Christ.

TODAY'S GOSPEL READING

The Reading is from the Holy Gospel according to John

(John 5:1-15) At that time, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, 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 thirty-eight 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.

The man whom the Lord heals had been trying, for all those years, to get into a pool of water reputed to hold miraculous healing power. Unfortunately, as the man complains to Jesus, he had no help: “**I have no man to put me into the pool!**” As is typical for the Gospel of John, a simple sentence, even a simple word carries a lot of theological freight. On the surface of it, the text states that the only hope of healing for the poor man was an angelic miracle at the Sheep’s Pool, but that no fellow-human would be there to help him descend into the pool. Read within the larger context of the Gospel of John, however, “I have no man” takes on a deeper meaning.

First of all, the Gospel begins by stating that the Word of God took on human flesh: it is not an angel that appeared, but God himself; and he did not merely appear only to vanish soon after, but he took on flesh of our flesh, and tasted the fullness of being human. Secondly, when Pilate paraded Jesus before the crowd calling for his crucifixion, he exclaimed, “Behold *the man!*” (Jn 19:5). The Gospel of John hints here at the fundamental confession of the Church: *we do have a Man*, because God has come in the flesh, as a man, to be with us! In fact, this is precisely what the interpretation given by one of the hymns sung at the Vespers of this Sunday:

A man lay sick by the Sheep's Pool. Seeing Thee, O Lord, he cried to Thee: "There is no man to lower me into the pool when the water is stirred!" Immediately the Savior was moved to pity, and said to him: It was for you that I became man; because of you I was clothed in mortal flesh. Yet you say: I have no man!" ... Remember us all, and have mercy, O holy Lover of humankind!

The paralytic is healed **by the Sheep Gate, at a pool called in Hebrew Bethesda**. Now, "Bethesda" means, in Aramaic, "house of grace" or "house of mercy." We have here a fitting image for the Church: it is the gathering of those "sheep" who are baptized and healed; it is a hospital to impart healing, a pool of unending grace, a school to share knowledge of God, the community of those who have found the Man—Jesus Christ, our Lord. And we can make our own the singing of today's Kontakion:

By Thy divine intercession, O Lord, as Thou didst raise up the paralytic of old, so also raise up my soul paralyzed by sins and thoughtless acts; so that being saved I may sing to Thee: Glory to Thy majesty, O gracious Christ!

We are called, since we are an "apostolic" community, to continue the work of the Apostles by sharing with the world that which Christ makes available freely and abundantly to those who are members of the "house of grace", his Church. Obviously, we must start with ourselves: first taste and see that the Lord is good, then go proclaim. And so, we are called to take to heart what we have heard today: **Jesus Christ heals you heals you—sin no more—arise!**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

We are very grateful for your continued financial support, which allows St. Anthony's to remain current with its obligations.

Remember in your prayers

LIVING: Dollie; Mother Barbara (recovering after surgery); Maura (Andronic); Don (Dollie's brother); Ann (Wilson), recovering after her new surgery; Nyal, Jean's son-in-law (motorcycle accident); Joseph Totin; Ion, Marius & Katherine (Stan); Serbanescu and Becker families; Gabriel; Charitini; Stella & Dimitrios; Christine (Abraham); Dollie; Venetia; Maura; Ann; Ed, Peter, John, Jonathan and Joanna; Andrei; Kent, Bob, David (relatives of Jean); Stelian; Diane); Susannah; Ed Sr (Totin).

DEPARTED: Dragos (friend of Fr Bogdan); Karen (Jane Best's daughter); Frank (Seba's brother); Kurt (Melinda's father); Jackie (Rose Totin's mother); Maria (Stella Lyras' sister); Sula; Kurt (Diane's son); Viorica; Norma; Miltiades; Tim (Becker); Silviu; Ross (Chrissi's friend); Richard Johns; Viorica; Bishop Antoun; Vito (DiPento); Jim and Marion (Raimondi); Stephanie (Yazge); Job; George (Georgiades); Abie (Abraham); Bill (Thomas); Marta.