

SOBORNOST

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American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

SERVICES

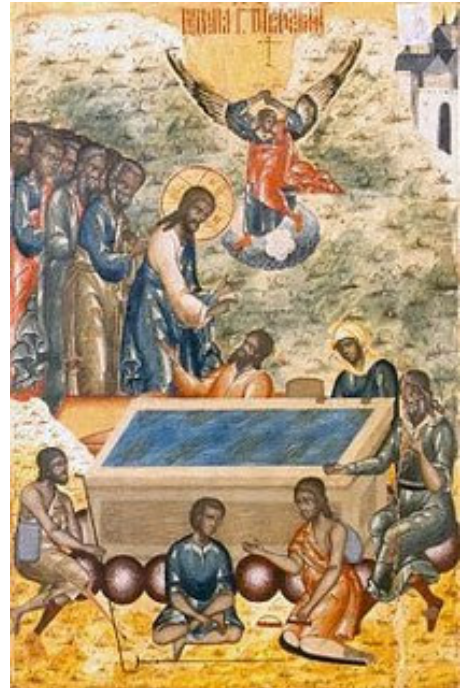
Saturday: Confession 5:00 PM

Great Vespers 5:30 PM

Sunday: Matins (Orthros) 8:45 AM

Children's Sunday School 9:30 AM

Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM.



April 29, 2018 – Sunday of the Paralytic (4th Sun. of Pascha)

By Fr. Alexander Schmemmann

On the third Sunday after Easter, the reading from the gospel of John recounts Christ's healing of a paralytic. "There was a feast," writes the Evangelist John, and 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. (Jn 5:1-9)

That is the gospel record, and having heard it, many will respond that it's just another miracle, another unbelievable event that has nothing whatsoever in common with our life, interests, needs, questions.... But we listen carefully and reflect: the gospel is so childishly simple, and its stories so short, that a person of today is easily fooled by this brevity and simplicity. It seems to him or her that the

truth about themselves and about their life must be complicated and cumbersome, because they themselves are complicated. But perhaps the gospel's ageless power resides in its reduction of everything to the most essential, elementary, fundamental: good and evil, darkness and light, man and God, life and death. And indeed, any focused and deep thought that involves not merely the mind, but one's entire being, in the end always concerns what is most essential. For all of life's complexity balances on the simplicity of eternal questions: good and evil, life and death, God and man.

So, in this particular gospel story, what is eternal and enduring? At its center, very clearly, are the paralytic's words to Christ, "I have no man." This truly is the cry of someone who has come to know the terrible power of human selfishness, narcissism. Every man for himself. Looking out for number one. All of them, all that great multitude of blind, sick, paralyzed, are all "waiting for the troubling of the waters," in other words, waiting for help, concern, healing, comfort. But...each waits by himself, for himself. And when the waters are troubled, each throws himself forward and forgets about the others... From the gospel's point of view, this pool is of course an image of the world, an image of human society, a symbol of the very organization of human consciousness.

Oh, of course, within the world one can find many examples of people who overcome egoism, examples of goodness and self-sacrifice. But even when someone has apparently overcome personal selfishness, he is still held prisoner by the category "his." He may have overcome bondage to himself as an individual, but then it is "his" family, and for "his" family, since "charity begins at home." If not family, then "his" ethnic group or country. If not this, then "his" social class, "his" political party. His, always his! And this "his" is invariably opposed to someone else's, which by definition becomes alien and hostile. We're told that this is how the world works, what can you do? But is this really true, is this really the ultimate, objective, and scientific truth about the person and human life?

Is it really true that everything in this world boils down to personal or collective self-interest, and that everyone lives by this? We are told that capitalism is wrong because it is self-serving and must, therefore, be destroyed in the name of communism. But self-serving is exactly what communism has been, constantly trumpeting its own worldview, its own class, its own party and so forth: its own against not-its-own, the other... And there is no escape whatsoever from this vicious cycle.

Unknown to us, however, we no longer feel suffocated by this world so totally drunk on all-consuming ego. We have become accustomed to blood, hatred, violence and, at best, indifference. Sometime in the 1920's, a young man,

practically a boy, left a note and then committed suicide: “I do not want to live in a world where everyone is playing a con game” All of this was suffocating him, he could not stand it any longer. But we are gradually harassed into accepting this as normal, and the horror of self-centeredness we cease experiencing as horrible... This is what the gospel story of the paralytic is about. All these sick, helpless, paralyzed people are sick first and foremost with incurable narcissism. This is what brings a person to cry: “I have no man!” There is no one! And this means that a person comes into being when narcissism is overcome; it means that human beings, above all, are a face turned toward the other person, eyes looking intently with concern and love into the eyes of the other person. It is love, co-suffering and care. The gospel also tells us that this new and authentic human being has been revealed to us, has come to us in Christ. In him, the One who comes to the lonely and long-suffering paralytic is no stranger, but “his own”; He comes in order to take up the sick man’s sufferings as his own, his life as his own, to help and to heal.

“Do you want to be healed?” This is not the question of someone intent on forcing, convincing or subduing others. It is the question of genuine love, and therefore, genuine concern. Religion, alas, can also become narcissism, exclusively busy with itself and its own. But it is important to understand that this kind of religion, in spite of whatever Christian cloak it might be wearing, is in reality not Christianity... For the whole of Christianity consists of breaking through the terrible walls of self-centeredness, breaking through to that love which, in the words of St Paul, God has “poured into our hearts” (Rom 5:5). That is Christianity’s new, eternal commandment, and the content of the entire gospel and all our faith ...

Today’s Epistle Lesson – The Acts of the Apostles 9:32-42

In those days, as Peter went through all *parts of the country*, that he also came down to the saints who dwelt in Lydda. There he found a certain man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years and was paralyzed. And Peter said to him, “Aeneas, Jesus the Christ heals you. Arise and make your bed.” Then he arose immediately. So all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.

At Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did. But it happened in those days that she became sick and died. When they had washed her, they laid *her* in an upper room. And since Lydda was near Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent two men to him, imploring *him* not to delay in coming to them. Then Peter arose and went with them. When he had

come, they brought *him* to the upper room. And all the widows stood by him weeping, showing the tunics and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them. But Peter put them all out, and knelt down and prayed. And turning to the body he said, “Tabitha, arise.” And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. Then he gave her *his* hand and lifted her up; and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive. And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed on the Lord. So it was that he stayed many days in Joppa with Simon, a tanner.

Today’s Gospel Lesson – Saint John 5:1-15

At that time, there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep *Gate* a pool, which is called in Hebrew, Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain time into the pool and stirred up the water; then whoever stepped in first, after the stirring of the water, was made well of whatever disease he had. Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he already had been *in that condition* a long time, He said to him, “Do you want to be made well?” The sick man answered Him, “Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; but while I am coming, another steps down before me.” Jesus said to him, “Rise, take up your bed and walk.” And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked. And that day was the Sabbath. The Jews therefore said to him who was cured, “It is the Sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your bed.” He answered them, “He who made me well said to me, ‘Take up your bed and walk.’” Then they asked him, “Who is the Man who said to you, ‘Take up your bed and walk’?” But the one who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, a multitude being in *that* place. Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, “See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you.” The man departed and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.

A Word From the Holy Fathers

Let us all conduct ourselves worthily both of our faith and of our vocation, maintaining fairness towards each other rightly and unalterably, and storing up mercy for ourselves for the expiation of our sins at the time of judgment. For mercy rejoices against judgment, and the merciful shall obtain mercy, and blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. What is easier than this transaction? What is more profitable than this contract? What is more wretched than to disregard this commerce? Have you seen a beggar in distress? ...Have you had

compassion on him? Have you given him mercy according to your means? You will find mercy, and will quench that fire which the thorns of your other faults have lit, as it dies down and is wasted away by the drops of mercy. ...The Judge Himself, the Lord Himself, is faithful. In judging He shall not forget His own words. He Himself cries aloud, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

...Having watered ourselves with charity, and tilled well the fallow land with sympathy for the poor, let us bring forth the crowning virtue, love, through which peace and calm accrue to our own life, and also piety and faith in God are expressed. For "by this they will know," says the Lord, "that you are my disciples, if you love one another." It is from the same source that the friend of peace, the bosom disciple, has drawn for us his flowing streams, which he pours out saying, "If a man say, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?" (1 Jn. 4:20), which is to say, "O man, when you sever from yourself and hate one with whom you dwell in the same city, who breathes the same air as you, who cherishes the same manner of life, and perhaps embraces the same pursuit, and bears the same aspect, and has shared of the same blood, and to whom you have been bound with the unbreakable bond of nature, then how will you be believed when you say you love God, whom it is impossible to see with human eyes, and who, we know, is above all human intercourse?" It is impossible to be man-hating and not be God-hating, as it is impossible to be man-loving without being God-loving. Therefore, let us love one another, beloved ones, using again the Divine as a good counselor and exhorter, who cries out in a loud voice, "Love is from God; and he who loves is born of God, and knows God, for God is love," (1 Jn. 4:7-8) and "if a man says he is in the light, and hates his brother, he is in darkness, and he who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no occasion of stumbling in him; he who hates his brother is in darkness, and goes in darkness, and does not know where he goes, because darkness has blinded his eyes." (1 Jn. 2:9-11) Understand, O man, that he who was divorced himself from the love of his neighbor is also torn away from love of God, and is filled with darkness, and having had the eyes of his mind blinded, he wastes away his life in distant straying and deceit and deep murk, neither perceiving the light, nor knowing wherein he is walking; while he who loves his neighbor is acknowledged as God's friend, inasmuch as he provides clearer evidence of his love for the the common Lord by his affectionate actions towards his fellow-servant; and he is further held to have been born of Him, since he has not darkened the splendor of his exalted birth with any base and alien seed of man-hating, and he is illuminated by the rays of light, and irradiated, as much as man is able, by knowledge of God.

Such and so great is the power of love, and in this way it provides the enjoyment of all manner of good things to those who embrace it, and when it falls away, all grace is gone, every virtuous practice disappears, every kind of intercourse is severed, every commonwealth with its laws and men is hurled into disaster; for just as when the bodily joints, wherewith an animal's members are bound and held together, are broken and rent asunder, immediately the whole animal is dispersed and destroyed, so when love, which joins and holds everything together, is excised from our life, all virtue and order and every other good thing is likewise broken up and ruined, while wickedness, corruption and disorder are introduced instead, and generally no good thing is brought to a profitable end without love. Indeed, neither is the possession of gifts useful without love, nor is the gift of prophecy precious, nor is faith, even if it removes and brings down mountains, considered piety without love; nor is the giving away of all one's possessions to the needy, and denuding oneself of all one's wealth accounted as charity.... Do you think that what I have said is rash? The trumpet of the Spirit, the great Paul, sounds and speaks in accord with me, wherefore it is better to hear his clarion call. What then does he say? "If," he says, "I speak with the tongues of men and angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal; and though I have prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing; and though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love it profits me nothing." (1 Cor. 13:1-3) Do you see what an awesome and terrible utterance he has given out? ...He who has bestowed all his goods to feed the poor, and has given his body to the fire, and who has profited nothing without love, what great damage he has suffered! It is with good reason that in its absence the rest should remain useless; for just as when a source is stopped, the streams flowing from it dry up, and though some remnants of water are left in the crevices, they are useless and unfit for drinking - rather, they cause great harm and nausea to anyone wishing to drink of them; so also when love, from which flow the graces of the virtues and gifts, is dried up by hate, they are likewise quenched and destroyed; and if you should perhaps see some remnant of righteousness, or mercy, or knowledge, or prophecy, or faith left in the depths of the soul, it is feeble, spurious, putrid and faded, and yields no benefit to him who tries to pride himself on it.

Therefore, beloved ones, let us diligently cleave to love. Let us pursue it earnestly, let us take it in our home, let us make it our companion in market-places, in places of seclusion, in cities, in the wilderness, in councils, in tribunals; or rather, if we cling to it in all purity, we shall not see any tribunals at all. For it is the source of long-suffering, of kindness, of lenience, of absence of anger, of meekness, of faith,

of hope, of patience. Where these qualities are present, strife and wranglings and trials and tribunals vanish, their use being clearly proved to be unprofitable and vain. That it gushes forth with these streams, hear again from the same wondrous Paul as he cries, "Love suffers long, and is kind; love does not envy, does not vaunt itself, is not puffed up, does not behave itself unseemly, seeks not her own, is not provoked; love thinks no evil, does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth, covers all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things; love never fails." (1 Cor. 13:4-8) Let us, therefore, love one another, beloved ones, that we may keep the possession of the gifts given us by God, that we may not render useless the grace of the virtues. Let us love one another that we may be deemed worthy of becoming and being called God's children, that we may be made heirs to the kingdom of heaven.

– St. Photius the Great, Archbishop of Constantinople, *Homily 6.6-8*

Also Commemorated Today: Nine Martyrs of Cyzicus



The city of Cyzicus is in Asia Minor on the coast of the Dardenelles (Hellespont). Christianity already began to spread there through the preaching of Saint Paul (June 29). During the persecutions by the pagans, some of the Christians fled the city, while others kept their faith in Christ in secret.

At the end of the third century Cyzicus was still basically a pagan city, although there was a Christian church there. The situation in the city distressed the Christians, who sought to uphold Christianity. The nine holy martyrs Thaumasius, Theognes, Rufus, Antipater, Theostichus, Artemas, Magnus, Theodotus, and Philemon were also from Cyzicus. They came from various places, and were of different ages: the young like Saint Antipater, and the very old like Saint Rufus. They came from various positions in society: some were soldiers, countryfolk, city people, and clergy. All of them declared their faith in Christ, and prayed for the spread of Christianity.

The saints boldly confessed Christ and fearlessly denounced the pagan impiety. They were arrested and brought to trial before the ruler of the city. Over several

days they were tortured, locked in prison and brought out again. They were promised their freedom if they renounced Christ. But the valiant martyrs of Christ continued to glorify the Lord. All nine martyrs were beheaded by the sword (+ ca. 286-299), and their bodies buried near the city.

In the year 324, when the Eastern half of the Roman Empire was ruled by Saint Constantine the Great (May 21), and the persecutions against Christians ended, the Christians of Cyzicus removed the incorrupt bodies of the martyrs from the ground and placed them in a church built in their honor. Various miracles occurred from the holy relics: the sick were healed, and the mentally deranged were brought to their senses. The faith of Christ grew within the city through the intercession of the holy martyrs, and many of the pagans were converted to Christianity.

When Julian the Apostate (361-363) came to rule, the pagans of Cyzicus complained to him that the Christians were destroying pagan temples. Julian gave orders to rebuild the pagan temples and to jail Bishop Eleusius. Bishop Eleusius was set free after Julian's death, and the light of the Christian Faith shone anew through the assistance of the holy martyrs.

In Russia, not far from the city of Kazan, a monastery was built in honor of the Nine Martyrs of Cyzicus. It was built by the hierodeacon Stephen, who brought part of the relics of the saints with him from Palestine. This monastery was built in the hope that through their intercession and prayers people would be delivered from various infirmities and ills, particularly a fever which raged through Kazan in 1687. Saint Demetrius of Rostov (September 21), who composed the service to the Nine Martyrs, writes, "through the intercession of these saints, abundant grace was given to dispel fevers and trembling sicknesses." Saint Demetrius also described the sufferings of the holy martyrs and wrote a sermon for their Feast day. (*from oca.org*)

Venerable Memnon the Wonderworker

Saint Memnon the Wonderworker from his youth he lived in the Egyptian desert. By his arduous ascetical efforts, he attained a victory of spirit over the flesh. As Igumen of one of the Egyptian monasteries, he wisely and carefully guided the brethren. Even while aiding them through prayer and counsel, the saint did not waver in his efforts in the struggle against temptation. He received the gift of clairvoyance through unceasing prayer and toil. At his prayer a spring of water gushed forth in the wilderness, locusts destroying the harvest perished, and the shipwrecked who called on his name were saved. After his death, the mere mention of his name dispelled a plague of locusts and undid the cunning wiles of evil spirits. (*from oca.org*)



May Anniversaries and Birthdays



Anniversaries:

Ronnie & Katrina Robinson 1st Kari & Mary Diane David 4th
Alex & Valentina Makowelski 18th Chris & Nicole Nicolaus 27th
Brad & Bernadette Karbowsky 28th

Birthdays:

Charlotte Flade 6th Helen Janowiak 12th Amelia Flade 15th
Jennifer Popescu 20th Olivia Wright 24th Andy Single 27th
Stephen Sproul 30th Tanner Sticht 30th

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In Your Prayers – Please Remember... His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW, His Grace Bishop GREGORY, Fr. Joseph & Family, Greek Orthodox Archbishop Paul Yazigi of Aleppo, Syriac Orthodox Archbishop Yohanna Ibrahim of Aleppo, His Grace Bishop Neofitos of Nyeri and Mt. Kenya, Fr. John & Pani Betty Jean Baranik, Fr. Vincent Saverino, Presbyteria Katie Baker and family, Santiago Alzugaray, Alicia Barosio and family, Jeffrey Carey, Tatyana and Slava Chumak & family, Xenia Chilkowich, Jon Church, Ramius Connour, Curtis Cooper, Luke Cooper, Tina Crull, Mary Diane David, Ron Dominiecki, Linda A. Georgiev, Heather Himler, John Homick, Cameron Houk, Helen Janowiak, John M. Janowiak, Tucker Karl and family, Robert & Pam Karpin, Andrew Kinn, Kopan family, Brian, Helen, and Luke Mahony, Valentina Makowelski, Susan Matula, Anna Meinhold, Dn. Henry Middleton, David & Kathryn Newman, Bobby Nutter & Family, Henry & Lisa Osborne, Westin Perry & Parents, John Reece, Mary Reed, Chris & Kaitlin Rixey, Jerry Von Ronne, Anne Rosario, James, Theodore and Christina Ristas, Samson Family, Sharon Sheptak, Dawn & Faith Ulmschneider, Lydia Vita, Christine, Marshall, Nathaniel, Subdcn. Nectarios and Ia, the Syrian Christians displaced by war, Mother Virginia Marie and the Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco, and all those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)