

SOBORNOST

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American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

SERVICES

Saturdays: Confession 5:00 PM,

Great Vespers 5:30 PM

Sundays: Matins (Orthros) 8:45 AM

Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM.

May 22, 2016 – Sunday of the Paralytic

A Prophetic Exegesis of the Healing of the Paralytic by John Sanidopoulos

"For I do not wish you to be ignorant, brethren, of this mystery - that you may not be wise in your own conceits - that hardness in part to Israel has happened till the fullness of the nations may come in, and so all Israel will be saved" (Rom. 11:25).

Beyond the historical interpretation of the healing of the Paralytic at the Pool of Bethesda by Jesus, St. Cyril of Alexandria, in his *Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Bk. 2, Ch. 5), offers a most interesting spiritual interpretation of this healing to lay out in the open a hidden and deeper truth of these verses in John 5:1-15. To understand the prophetic significance of the healing of the Paralytic as described in John 5:1-15, one must understand the context of these verses in light of the previous verses. The healing of the Paralytic took place on Pentecost in the city of Jerusalem. We are previously told that Jesus was in Jerusalem for the feast of Passover fifty days prior, at which time He was met by a few faithful Jews, yet for the most part the Jews were stubborn and He was not received by them. In grief, Jesus departed Jerusalem and went to Samaria and Galilee, where He was well received by the Samaritans and Gentiles of Galilee. Having fulfilled His mission to the Samaritans and Galileans, Jesus returned to Jerusalem for their next big feast



- Pentecost. He goes to the healing waters of Bethesda, where there is a paralytic who was for a "long time" sick, thirty-eight years in fact, and Jesus heals Him.

St. Cyril carefully explains that when Jesus left Jerusalem in grief after Passover, and went to Samaria and Galilee to preach to them the word of salvation, this signifies His withdrawal from the Jews after His Crucifixion and Resurrection, at which time He fully gave Himself to the Gentiles and non-Jews. But His return again to Jerusalem after the fulfillment of the weeks of Pentecost, "signifies as it were in types darkly, that there will be of His loving-kindness a return of our Savior to the Jews in the last ages of the present world, wherein they who have been saved through faith in Him, shall celebrate the all-holy feasts of the saving Passion."

This is further illustrated in the number of years the Paralytic has been ill. That he was paralyzed for thirty-eight years, according to Cyril, indicates "that he had not yet attained to the perfect number of the Law, I speak of four times ten, or forty." Cyril goes on to explain: "That the Paralytic is healed before the full time of the Law, signifies again by a corresponding type, that Israel having blasphemously raged against Christ, will be infirm and paralytic and spend a long time in doing nothing; yet will not depart to complete punishment, but will have some visitation from the Savior, and will himself too be healed at the pool by obedience and faith. But that the number forty is perfect according to the Divine Law, will be by no means hard to learn by them who have once read the Divine Scriptures. 'Jesus said unto him, *do you want to be whole?*'"

Therefore, the healing of the Paralytic, according to St. Cyril of Alexandria, prophetically signifies the end times, when the fulfillment of the time of the Gentiles has come to pass, according to the Apostle Paul, and the Jews will receive Jesus "by obedience and faith" before His glorious Second Coming, and thus will be made "whole."

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

The Word was made flesh, not only to offer up this body for all, but that we, partaking of his Spirit, might be deified, a gift which we could not otherwise have gained than by His clothing Himself in our created body; for hence we derive our name of “men of God” and “men in Christ.”

– St. Athanasius the Great



On Stewardship and the Orthodox Life – Part 71: Be Still And Know That I Am God

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth should change...” (Psalm 46:1-2 RSV)

God has promised many blessings for His people. For most of us, that blessing is abundance. Abundance is defined as *“plentifulness of the good things of life; prosperity.”* The world’s majority, many of whom suffer at the hands of war, famine and disease, envy the abundance we have in our country. On the other hand, many who are blessed with abundance often live like they are in a condition of scarcity: *“the state of being in short supply.”* Recently it was reported about a group of professional athletes arriving for an out-of-town game. As they left the team bus, each was handed an envelope of money. This money was for meals and incidental expenses. It was lunch money for millionaires – millionaires living like they were in a condition of scarcity: *“the state of being in short supply.”*

What many of us have in “short supply,” however, is trust in God’s ongoing goodness. Earlier this year, due to overseas economic problems, the stock markets in the U.S. took a large loss. Those who had their money tied up in stocks found a great deal of the value of those stocks gone. What were they to do? Were they on the brink of financial disaster? Think further of the hundreds of thousands of refugees pouring out of the Middle East to escape war and the poverty that often accompanies war. I would imagine that many of those who were panicking over the stock market losses did not do as the Psalmist suggests: *“...we will not fear though the earth should change.”* What of those who had only what they could carry on their backs and were on the brink of losing even that? Many who were interviewed for media reports on the refugee crisis said that their faith in God would see them through – not matter what: *“we will not fear though the earth should change.”* The story is told of a foster parent who took in two little children. Both had been starved and ill-treated in their former lives. The older lived with the foster family for six months. When the younger child arrived, she was scared that she would never have enough to eat. The foster parent had hidden food all over the house so that the older child could take the younger one around to prove there was always food to eat.

Good stewards know that God will provide *“...though the earth should change...”* Our task is to see the abundance that is around us, acknowledge the God who provides it, and share that abundance with others without *“fear though the earth should change...”* (from acrod.org)

Also Commemorated Today: The Holy Fathers of the Second Ecumenical Council

The Second Ecumenical Council was convened in the year 381 and consolidated the victory of Orthodoxy attained in the year 325 at the First Ecumenical Council. During the difficult years which passed after the acceptance of the Nicene Symbol of Faith (Creed), the Arian heresy developed new offshoots. Under the guise of struggle against the Sabellian heresy, which taught about a blending of the Hypostatic Persons of the Father and the Son [as mere aspects or modalities within the Trinity], Macedonius began to employ the word “homoiousios” “of similar essence” [in contrast to the Orthodox teaching of “homoousios”, “of the same essence”] regarding the essence of the Son and that of the Father. This formula still presented a danger because Macedonius presented himself as a struggler against the Arians, who used the term “like the Father.” Besides this, the Macedonians, being semi-Arians, depending on conditions and advantages of the moment, sometimes inclined towards Orthodoxy, sometimes towards Arianism. They blasphemed the Holy Spirit by suggesting that He was not “of the same essence” with the Father and the Son.

A second heretic, Aetius, introduced the concept “anomoion” (“different in essence”). He said that the Father has a completely different essence from that of the Son. His disciple Eunomios taught a hierarchical subordination of the Son to the Father, and of the Holy Spirit to the Son. Everyone who came to him was rebaptized into the “death of Christ,” denying Baptism in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, which is commanded us by the Savior Himself (Mt. 28:19).

A third heresy arose from the teachings of Valentius and Ursacius at the Arimonian Council. They attempted to deceive the Orthodox bishops, proclaiming that the Son of God is from God, and is in the likeness of God the Father, and is not a created being as the Arians taught. The heretics did not wish to use the term “one in essence” in describing the relation of the Son to the Father, saying that the word “essence” is not found within the Holy Scripture. Besides these three main heresies, there were also many other false teachings. The heretic Apollinarios said, “The flesh of the Savior did not have a human soul or reason. The Word of God took the place of the absent soul; and Divinity remained dead for three days.”

For dealing with these crafters of heresy, the holy Emperor Theodosius the Great (379-395) convened an Ecumenical Council at Constantinople, at which 150 bishops were present. Upon investigation by the holy Fathers it was proposed to affirm a Confession of Faith from a Roman Council, which holy Pope Damasus had sent to Bishop Paulinos of Antioch. After reading the document aloud, the

holy Fathers rejected the false teaching of Macedonius, and unanimously affirmed the Apostolic teaching that the Holy Spirit is not a subordinate being, but is rather the Life-Creating Lord, Who proceeds from the Father, and is worshipped and glorified with the Father and the Son. In order to combat other heresies, of the Eunomians, Arians and Semi-Arians, the holy Fathers affirmed the Nicene Symbol of the Orthodox Faith.

In the Symbol (Creed), accepted by the First Ecumenical Council, the divine nature of the Holy Spirit was not addressed, since at that earlier time [in 325] heresies against the Holy Spirit had not become widespread. Therefore, the holy Fathers of the Second Ecumenical Council added to the Nicene Symbol its eighth, ninth, tenth, eleventh and twelfth sections. They definitively formulated and affirmed the Nicene-Constantinople Symbol of Faith, which is used even now by all the Orthodox Churches.

The Second Ecumenical Council also established the norms for ecclesiastical courts [Canon VI], and it decided to receive those repentant heretics who were properly baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity through Chrismation, but those baptized with a single immersion were to be received as pagans. (*from oca.org*)

Young Women's Encounter

Registration is now open for the Third Annual Diocesan Young Women's Encounter which will take place from Sunday, June 26th to Wednesday, June 29, 2016 at Sts Peter and Paul Church in Windber, PA which is open to young women in our Diocese ages 12-18. This engaging experience will highlight how young women can live our Orthodox Faith and serve the Church with their own unique gifts. This year we are really looking forward to having Katrina Bitar with us. She is the YES North America Program Director (Youth Equipped to Serve) for FOCUS North America (Fellowship of Orthodox Christians United to Serve.)

Space is limited to the first thirty respondents, so participants are urged to register as soon as possible. **Registration Deadline is June 1, 2016.** For more information, please visit <http://www.acrod.org/news/7283/ywe2016>

Diocesan Altar Boy Retreat

Plans are underway for the Annual Altar Boy Retreat which will take place from Sunday evening, June 26th (Registration is from 6pm till 8 p.m.) until Wednesday, June 29th. The Retreat will once again take place at Christ the Savior Seminary, Cathedral and Education Center in Johnstown. This year's outing will be to Teen Quest Ranch in Somerset, PA where they will enjoy a wide variety of outdoor activities. This is the time and place for our faithful

Altar Servers to join other Altar Boys from all over our Diocese. For more information, please visit <http://www.acrod.org/news/7283/abr-2016>. **All Altar Boys must be registered by June 13, 2016.**

What is on the agenda for the Holy and Great Council?

The Holy and Great Council will address important issues of concern to Orthodox Christians and all people. This includes the mission of the Orthodox Church in the modern world, the Orthodox diaspora, autonomy, marriage, fasting and relations with other Christians... These are matters important not only to the Orthodox, but to the entire world.

The Holy and Great Council gathers in Crete in the latter part of June 2016. It is the first time in 1200 years that 14 autocephalous Orthodox churches are meeting. Approximately 500 individuals will be part of this historic gathering, with a common desire to reinforce their relations and address contemporary spiritual and social challenges in the world.

The Convening of the Holy and Great Council of worldwide Orthodox Christianity – the first in over one thousand years, is a sign of hope and reassurance for not only Orthodox Christians, but for all people of faith around the globe. The remarkable and relentless pursuit of this Spirit-filled event is a signature characteristic of the life, mission and leadership of His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. In convening the Great and Holy Council this June, during the holy celebrations of Pentecost, His All-Holiness is bringing to fulfillment the vision of his two predecessors, Athenagoras and Demetrios, both of blessed memory.

But more than the completion of a more than fifty-year dream, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew has transformed the process beyond the mere structural process of the last fifty years, by adapting to the radically changed reality of Orthodoxy in the 21st Century.

When the road to the Holy and Great Council was embarked upon, World War II was only fifteen years in the past, the atheist Soviet Union controlled the lives of most Orthodox Christians and the church institutions that struggled to minister to them, and the world was deep into the winter of the Cold War. Orthodox Christianity in the Diaspora was profoundly segmented, if not outrightly fragmented. The Ecumenical Patriarchate had – only five years before – suffered a massive and systematic persecution in Constantinople, displacing hundreds of thousands of its communicants. Mount Athos was turning one thousand years old, and though life on the Holy Mountain had scarcely changed over the centuries, the world at-large was bracing to change at a pace unknown in history.

The need for dialogue, thinking together, interconnection, and new perspectives was everywhere. At the same time the Orthodox were commencing a process that is now taking place on the Island of Crete (a sacred *topos* of Apostolic visitation!), Pope John XXIII was convening the Second Vatican Council, a council that would radically push the Roman Catholic Church – in many ways quite unprepared – into the latter half of the 20th Century. Although the process has been much slower for the Orthodox Church to convene such a similar process, in retrospect we can see that the deliberate and slower pace has been more of an advantage, rather than the reverse.

Nearly half of the time that it has taken to finally arrive at the Holy and Great Council has occurred under the patriarchy of His All-Holiness Bartholomew, which coincided with the dissolution of the former Soviet Union and the resurgence of the Moscow Patriarchate under the autocracy that currently governs the Russian Federation.

As the national aspirations of the Ukrainian, Estonian, Czech, and Slovak peoples have created conditions for national and autocephalous or autonomous Churches, it has been Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew who from a position of *only* spiritual strength, has steered the Ark of Salvation through the dangerous shoals of self-interest and power-seeking. From the Phanar, despite and perhaps because of the difficulties as a religious and ethnic minority that continue unabated, His All-Holiness seeks only the benefit of *all* the local (autocephalous) Churches, putting the good of all above the ephemeral desires of any one. This has manifested as the kind of leadership that leaves a legacy of unity and conciliarity in its wake, even as the naysayers and gainsayers give rise to fear and even paranoia.

The significance of this Holy and Great Council cannot be overstated. The fact that all the Autocephalous Churches have agreed to meet, to dialogue, to exchange view and position – this in itself is an accomplishment of historic proportions. There are those who would contradict the former statement, but let us remember, that this has not happened in centuries, and for Orthodoxy, there have been no serious doctrinal disputes in over six hundred years, since the Hesychast controversies of the 14th Century.

Inasmuch as Orthodoxy is based in model of conciliarity under the aegis of the Holy Spirit, Hierarchy must be as much horizontal in its orientation as it is vertical, with consensus and unanimity forming the core of the process of adaptation. This is precisely why the Holy and Great Council is so necessary and so timely. As long as the local, autocephalous Churches are only speaking among themselves, each Church's local culture, economy, language, and local traditions will limit its scope and perspective on its own mission. The Bishops must be in dialogue with

one another in order to see the world from a differing perspective and consider the needs of their flocks from the holistic sense of the whole Body of the Church, whose Head is Christ.

The six preparatory documents: Autonomy, Diaspora, Ecumenical Relations, Fasting, Marriage, and Mission, address contemporary concerns of all the faithful. In doing so, the Bishops of the Church, under the guiding hand of His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, are demonstrating the living, breathing vibrancy of the Spirit of God, that infuses the Church to be the living Body of Christ. [*These documents can be found at www.orthodoxcouncil.org – Ed.*]

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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, Presbytera Katie Baker and family, Alicia Barosio and family, Millie Borys, Jeffrey Carey, Xenia Chilkowich, Jon Church, Ramius Connour, Curtis Cooper, Tina Crull, Ron Dominiecki, Linda A. Georgiev, Heather Himler, Alex Holthus, John Homick, Cameron Houk, Helen Janowiak, John M. Janowiak, Deanna Jarrett, Tucker Karl and family, Robert Karpin, Andrew Kinn, Kopan family, Brian, Helen, and Luke Mahony, Alex & Valentina Makowelski, Susan Matula, Anna Meinhold, Dn. Henry Middleton, David & Kathryn Newman, Bobby Nutter & Family, Henry & Lisa Osborne, Westin Perry & Parents, Mary Reed, Chris & Kaitlin Rixey, Jerry Von Ronne, Anne Rosario, James, Theodore and Christina Ristas, Samson Family, Sharon Sheptak, Dawn & Faith Ulmschneider, Daria Virvan, Lydia Vita, Christine, Marshall, Nathaniel, the Syrian Christians displaced by war, Mother Virginia Marie and the Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco, for the newly departed servant of God Timothy Loya, and all those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)