

SOBORNOST

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American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

SERVICES

Saturday: Vespers 5 PM

Sunday: Matins 8:45 AM

Sunday School 9:30 AM | Divine Liturgy 10 AM

May 15, 2022 – Sunday of the Paralytic 4th Sunday of Pascha

On the Fourth Sunday of Pascha both the reading from the Holy Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles describe miraculous healing. Our Lord heals a paralyzed man who had suffered this affliction for thirty-eight years, while the Apostle Peter heals another paralyzed man, Aeneas, who had been afflicted for eight years, and then raises a maiden, Tabitha, from death itself.

Let us consider for a moment the reaction of those who beheld and heard of the first miracle: they began to attack the man for breaking the Law of the Sabbath—or rather their narrow conception of the Law of the Sabbath—and with malicious intent sought out the one who had healed him. But in the case of the healings performed by the Apostle many came to faith in the Lord, at Lydda and Sharon, and Joppa. Can we explain the difference in reaction by a difference in the source of the miracle? Certainly not. For in the first case the Lord Himself acted by His own hand, in the latter through the hand of His chief disciple, but the divine power, grace, and love for man were one. The difference was in the heart of the witnesses, and so the two groups responded differently. As St. John Chrysostom comments concerning the envious disposition of the Jews in today's Gospel toward the Lord:

[H]ow great an evil is envy, how it disables the eyes of the soul to the endangering his salvation him who is possessed by it. For as madmen



often thrust their swords against their own bodies, so also malicious persons looking only to one thing, the injury of him they envy, care not for their own salvation. (Homily 37 on the Gospel of John)

Whoever has been a slave to this passion will know by his own experience that “envy is the rottenness of the bones.” (Proverbs 14:30)

How many vile fruits has the tree of envy produced! Cain slew Abel on account of envy, a fratricide Esau would have repeated but did not accomplish. As slaves to envy, Righteous Joseph’s brothers sold him into slavery in a strange land. Envy of David drove Saul into a mad rage and attempted murder, and led to a most miserable end. Closer to our own time, envy moved men of the Church to base slanders against St. Nektarios and his removal from the see of a Pentapolis. Mad, too, is the man who on seeing an indisputable miracle will not be converted but is only hardened in his unbelief, who will not bow down before his Lord but seeks to undermine Him and destroy Him, who cannot rejoice with the one healed but instead abuses the Law of God as a bludgeon to strike him down once more. It would be impossible to say how many lives have been ruined, how many relationships poisoned, but this typically hidden sin, the “mother of murder” and countless other injuries. If not uprooted, it will lead without fail to the spiritual death of the one strangled in its grip. St. Basil the Great counsels each so caught: “You are the enemy of no one else but your own salvation. Everyone whom you pursue with envy can run and slip away from you, but you cannot run away from yourself.”

None of us know in advance precisely when God will visit us with a special consolation, will vouchsafe a special outpouring of His grace, or make us the recipients or witnesses to a miraculous healing of body or soul. Aeneas suffered for eight years, the paralytic in today’s Gospel waited thirty-eight years for his healing, and the return to life of Righteous Tabitha was a miracle beyond all expectation. It may seem at times that the Lord has forgotten us completely, has not heard our cries, our prayers, to be delivered from unbearable pain of soul or body, to be freed from the yoke of an ingrained passion or sin, to help us to pray without ceasing. Of course He has not forgotten us, has not ceased to love us even when He seems to be hidden or to have become silent, but in all this He desires that we become long-suffering and patient even as He is, even if we have to wait thirty-eight years or a whole lifetime. In the meantime, our spiritual father helping us and by the prayers of our brethren, let us not add to our own burdens by cultivating passions such as envy, which instill in us such madness that we will reject the grace of God freely offered, preferring like those in today’s Gospel the cold comfort of our own perdition. Especially on feast days, the demons proffer little “gifts,” thoughts and temptations to slander, gossip, envy, and whatever other

evils the old man delights in, to spoil our joy and turn our eye from the one thing needful.

Like all the passions, envy is a perversion and corruption of a natural, good impulse given by God. According to Abba Isaiah of Scetis, envy is a distortion of the good desire to emulate and acquire the virtues of the saints. The scribes and Pharisees knew that the Lord was greater than them, at times even recognized His miracles, but instead of emulating His incomparable example, they were enraged. Let us imitate rather the example given to us today in the Book of Acts. When we see one in our midst, striving to do the will of God like the Apostle Peter, let us be deepened in our Faith, rejoice in the Lord, pray for him, and strive to acquire some measure of his virtue. Has the Lord not given us, too, countless blessings, beyond anything we deserve or could ever deserve? “It is madness for a Christian to be envious,” writes St. John of Kronstadt, “In Christ we have all received infinitely great blessings.” (*My Life in Christ*) Let us not then be at enmity with our brother, because in truth when are envious of him, our hearts are set against the One who created him and gave him every blessing that he possesses, God the Lord. How much more blessed would each man be, how great a service would he bring to all those around him, if instead he would only heed the words of the Apostle Paul, “Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.” (Romans 12:15)

Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers, O Lord Jesus Christ our God have mercy on us. Amen. (*from holycross.org*)

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

In those days, as Peter was traveling through all those regions, he also came down to visit the saints who lived in Lydda. There, he found a certain man named Aeneas, who was paralyzed and who had been bedridden for eight years. Peter said to him, “Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you! Get up and make your bed!” And immediately, he arose. All who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.

Now, there lived in Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, (which, when translated means Gazelle). This woman was full of good works and acts of mercy. But it happened that at this time, she became ill and died. She was washed and placed in an upper room. As Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men to him, imploring him, ‘Do not to delay in coming to help us!’ So Peter arose and went with them. When he arrived, the disciples led him into the upper room. All the widows stood by him weeping, showing to Peter the coats and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them. But having put everyone out of the room, Peter knelt down and began to pray. Turning towards the body, he said, “Tabitha, get up!” She opened her eyes, and when she

saw Peter, she sat up. Then Peter gave her his hand and raised her up. Calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive. This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord.

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 in Jerusalem, by the sheep gate, there is a pool with five porches called in Hebrew "Bethesda." Under these laid a great multitude of people who were sick, blind, lame, or paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at certain times into the pool, and stirred up the water. Then whoever stepped in first after the stirring of the water was made whole of whatever disease he had. A certain man was there, who had been sick for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and perceived that the man had been sick for a long time, he asked him, "Do you want to be made well?" The sick man replied, "Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I am coming, someone else steps down before me!" Jesus said to him, "Arise, take up your mat, and walk!" Immediately, the man was made well; he took up his mat and began to walk. Now, it was the Sabbath on that day. And so, the Jews said to the man who had been cured, "It is the Sabbath! It is not lawful for you to carry the mat!" The man answered them, "He who made me well, that one said to me, 'Take up your mat, and walk.'" Then they asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Take up your mat, and walk?'" But the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn in the crowd that was there. Later, Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, "Behold, you have become well. Sin no more, so that nothing worse may happen to you!" The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.

A Word From the Holy Fathers

Brethren and fathers, after the feast the season invites us once again to talk with you and to return to the usual instruction. And we have come with enthusiasm knowing that we are appointed for this, and woe to us if we do not talk with you as much as possible. So, what is there to say in the present circumstances? That each of you, like a merchant, having amassed spiritual wealth for himself during holy Lent, has reached holy Pascha like a harbor, laden with many excellent stocks of virtue, namely: fasting, vigil, prayer, hard work and all the other exertions of holiness. For a physical harbor is not like a harbor of the mind. When someone comes to anchor in the former, they ease off and have no worries about the storms and dangers of the sea. In the latter on the contrary, the passions become more ferocious with the relaxation of the flesh, and the spirits of wickedness join in the

assault like storms: the spirit of fornication, the spirit of gluttony, the spirit of avarice, the spirit of despondency, the spirit of dejection, the spirit of pride. The fear is that we may be sunk in harbor. David once looked unguardedly on Uriah's wife, and readers know what he suffered. *Jacob ate and was filled*, says Scripture, *and the beloved kicked* [Deut 32,15]. Someone touched without meaning to and they were enflamed to lust and gave birth to iniquity.

Take care, those who are listening to this. *Flee the destructive places and ways of sin*. Govern your sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch, your food, drink and sleep, that you may keep from being overwhelmed by the tempest of the passions. This is worth remembering: someone who sails across the physical sea is subject to storms and tempests without their wanting it, while someone who crosses the water of the mind is lord of tempest and of calm. For if they manfully shake off unseemly thoughts, they are filled with calm, having the Holy Spirit as the companion of their voyage, as it is related of Saint Arsenios. But one whose senses are unbridled and who lets in desires like streams, stirs up a most dreadful storm for themselves. Unless the person does not swiftly smooth out their tempestuous thoughts, will end by repeating those miserable words, *I entered the depths of the sea, and a tempest drowned me* [Psalm 68,3]. Therefore let reason be in control, and let the better not be dragged down by the worse, but let the spirit be master and act for the better. Or don't you know what sin produces? Didn't it introduce death into the world? Didn't it destroy the earth? Hasn't it filled the inhabited world with graveyards and tombs from the beginning of time until now? For humanity was incorrupt before the fall and none of the things I have mentioned would have started if the first-formed had steadfastly observed the commandment that had been given. Sin is the cause of the everlasting punishments, the fuel of the unquenchable fire of Gehenna, the food of the undying worm; sin that has made humanity, that was in honor, be compared to the unreasoning beasts [Cf. Psalm 48,13.21].

And so, because sin is like all this, destructive and deadly, we must flee from it, brethren, with all our might, and choose virtue, which makes humans angels, raises them from death, resists the demons, overcomes the rulers of this age, and finally betroths them to the kingdom of heaven. May we all reach it too by the grace and love for humankind of our Lord Jesus Christ, with whom to the Father and the holy Spirit belong glory, might and honor, now and for ever, and the ages of ages. Amen.

– St. Theodore the Studite, *Catechesis 4, Given on the Sunday of the Paralytic*

Also Commemorated Today: St. Kali the Philanthropist

All that we know of Saint Kali comes from the Service composed in her honor. The acrostic of the Canon to Saint Kali informs us that the poem was written by

"the Cretan". In other words, it was written by an Archbishop of Crete. In the two manuscripts we have of this Service, we are given the interpretation of this, that it was "Andrew of Crete". If this Andrew of Crete is indeed Saint Andrew, Archbishop of Crete, then we know Saint Kali lived before his death in 740. But then again, this could be another Archbishop of Crete. Some have proposed Nikephoros Moschopoulos, Metropolitan of Crete, who was Metropolitan from 1285-1322. If this is the case, then Saint Kali lived no later than the fourteenth century.

Saint Kali was from Asia Minor. She was rich and disposed of her property to philanthropic causes. She was not likely a nun in a monastery, since nowhere in her Service does it indicate that she was, but she did live like a monastic. Rather, she housed the homeless and the needy in her home, because she was dedicated to ministering to the suffering of those less fortunate.

Kali was a virgin who lived wisely with asceticism, fasting and unceasing prayer. Her characteristic virtue was her philanthropy. Her chief motive was her desire to keep the commandments of Christ, and to imitate divine mercy and love for mankind.

In her Service many miracles are also attributed to her. At one time she made bread to distribute to the poor, and God made it so that as the bread was distributed it never diminished in order for all to be fed. Even after death are miracles attributed to Saint Kali. So many are her miracles, that the hymnographer refers it to being a "sea of miracles" and he calls her "miracle-gusher". She is known to have healed both soul and body, but especially painful and chronic diseases, rheumatism, arthritis, paralysis and deformities of the joints of body parts.

In Eleftherna of Mylopotamos, which is in the prefecture of Rethymno of Crete, the inhabitants have placed an icon of Saint Kali in a small cave, which is, in fact, an ancient carved tomb. Also on the islands of Kimolos and Paros there are places called Agia Kali. Each of these places have their own traditions regarding the identity of this Saint. The memory of Saint Kali is celebrated on May 15th, 22nd and Bright Saturday. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

Saint Barbaros

Saint Barbaros lived during the reign of Emperor Michael the Stammerer (820-829). A former robber from Arabia, he ventured with his band of pirates to Acarnania in Greece and for a long time he committed robberies, extortions and murders. The Acarnanians revolted against these pirates and killed them all, except Barbaros who escaped. But the Lord, Who does not desire the death of a sinner, turned him to repentance. Once, when Barbaros was sitting in a cave and gazing

upon his stolen possessions, the grace of God touched his heart. He thought about the inevitability of death and pondered over the multitude of his wicked deeds. He was distressed in his heart and he decided to make a beginning of repentance, saying, "The Lord did not despise the prayer of the robber hanging beside Him. May He spare me through His ineffable mercy."

Barbaros left all his treasures behind in the cave and he went to the nearest church, which was dedicated to Saint George the Great Martyr in Nisa. During the Divine Liturgy, Barbaros saw angels serving with the priest named John Nikopolitou. Afterwards he asked the priest where were the men he was serving with, to which the priest replied that God had granted him a rare vision of the holy angels serving at the Divine Liturgy. Barbaros did not conceal his wicked deeds from the priest, and he asked to be accepted for repentance and catechism. The priest gave him a place in his own home, and Barbaros followed him, going about on his hands and knees like a four-legged animal, since he considered himself unworthy to be called a man. In the household of the priest he lived with the cattle, eating with the animals and considering himself more wicked than any creature. Indeed, to recall his sins, he decided to remain for the rest of his life, tied at the neck, waist and legs with three chains just as he tied to his victims when he was a robber. The three chains were in honor of the Holy Trinity. Having received absolution from his sins from the priest, Barbaros went into the woods of Tryfo in Xiromero of the municipality of Aetolia-Acarmania and lived there for twelve years (or eighteen years depending on sources), naked and without clothing, suffering from the cold and heat. His body became dirty and blackened all over.

Finally, Barbaros received a sign from on high that his sins were forgiven, and that he would die a martyr's death. Once, merchants came to the place where Barbaros labored. In the deep grass before them they saw something moving. Thinking that this was an animal, they shot several arrows from their bows. Coming closer, they were terrified to see that they had mortally wounded a man. Barbaros begged them not to grieve. He told them about himself and he asked that they relate what had happened to the priest at whose house he had once lived.

After this, Saint Barbaros yielded up his spirit to God. The priest, who had accepted the repentance of the former robber, found his body shining with a heavenly light. The priest buried the body of Saint Barbaros at the place where he was killed on June 23.

Afterwards, a curative myrrh began to issue forth from the grave of the Saint, which healed various maladies. At his burial a woman blind for seven years was healed. From then on many miracles are recorded. Nearby the grave is a spring from which many faithful apply to various wounds for healing. Patriarch Kallistos

of Constantinople in 1355 and Joseph Bryennios in 1400 tell us that Bulgarians were baptized in this spring. Constantine Akropolites says his daughter was healed of leprosy by Saint Barbaros.

In 1571 a Venetian soldier named Sklavounos, who took part in the Battle of Lepanto, became sick and was near death. He had a dream of Saint Barbaros who told him to visit his grave in order to be healed. When he arrived at the grave of the Saint he venerated his holy relics and immediately began to recover. Wanting to honor the Saint in his homeland, he decided to bring the relics of the Saint to Venice. On his way, he decided to stop his ship in Kerkyra in the village of Potamos. Here the relics of the Saint cured a paralytic child of the Souvlaki family. Sklavounos allowed many of the sick in this place to come venerate the Saint, and many were healed. To honor Saint Barbaros, the locals renamed the church of their village from Life-Giving Spring to Saint Barbaros in honor of this event, and celebrate annually the healing of the paralyzed boy on May 15th. He is also celebrated on June 23 in Kerkyra as Saint Barbaros the Pentapoliti.

The Cave of the Saint can still be seen in Tryfo of Aetolia-Acarmania near his church. Sources say the relics of the Saint are in a small Italian village known as Villa Barbaro. The chains of the Saint were lost when the Ottomans invaded Xiromero. (*from johnsanidopoulos.com*)

Social Team for May 22

Team 2 is up next week - Dewey, Carrie LaMere, H. Shear. Thank you!

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In Your Prayers – Please Remember... His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW, His Eminence Metropolitan GREGORY, Fr. Joseph & Family, His Grace Bishop Neofitos of Nyeri & Mt. Kenya, Bennett family, Tatyana & Slava Chumak & family, Luke & Marlena Cooper, Roberta Corson, Jon Church, Tina Crull, Mary Diane David, Howl family, Andrew Kinn, Kopan family, Valentina Makowelski, Susan Matula, Anna Meinhold, David & Kathryn Newman, John Reece, Mary Reed, Rose Song, Dcn. Nectarios & Ia, Mother Virginia Marie & the Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco, the suffering people of Ukraine, and those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)