

The grace of the Holy Spirit, which is given mystically to every Christian when he is baptized, is manifested in proportion to our obedience to the commandments of the Lord. That is, if a Christian obeys the commandments of the Lord more, grace acts with him more, while if he obeys them less, grace acts within him less. Just as a spark, when covered in the ashes of fire becomes increasingly manifest as one removes the ashes, and the more fire wood you put the more the fire burns, so the grace that has been given to every Christian through Holy Baptism is hidden in the heart and covered up by the passions and sins, and the more a man acts in accordance with the commandments of Christ, the more he is cleansed of the passions and the more the fire of Divine grace lights in his heart, illumines and deifies him.

Saint Nikodemos of the Holy Mountain



**3 May 2015 is the
Sunday of the Paralytic**

Matins Gospel: Luke 24:13-35

Epistle: Acts 9:32-42

Gospel: John 5:1-15

Resurrectional Apolytikion:

Let the Heavens rejoice; let earthly things be glad; for the Lord hath wrought might with His arm, He hath trampled upon death by death. The first-born of the dead hath He become. From the belly of Hades hath He delivered us, and hath granted great mercy to the world.

Seasonal Kontakion

Though You went down into the tomb, You destroyed Hades' power, and You rose the victor, Christ God, saying to the myrrh-bearing women, "Hail!" and granting peace to Your disciples, You who raise up the fallen.

Readings and saints for this week:

Monday: Acts 10:1-16; John 6:56-69
Martyr Pelagia; Hilariion the Wonderworker

Tuesday: Acts 10:21-33; John 7:1-13
Great Martyr Irene; Martyrs Neophytus, Gaius and Gianus

Wednesday: Acts 14:6-18; John 7:14-30
Mid-Pentecost; Prophet Job; Seraphim the Struggler

Thursday: Acts 26:1, 12-20; John 8:12-20
Appearance of the Sign of the Cross; Cyril, Abp. Of Jerusalem

Friday: John 21:15-25; 1 John 1:1-7; John 19:25-28, 21:24-25
John the Theologian; Arsenios the Great

Saturday: Acts 12:1-11; John 8:31-42
Prophet Isaiah; Martyr Christopher



Evangelion

A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith

3 May 2015

Do You Want to be Healed?

Today we hear Saint John's account of the healing of the paralytic man by the pool of Bethesda. He had been waiting for thirty-eight years to be healed. When Jesus saw him, He asked him whether he wanted to be healed and when the man replied that he had nobody to help him into the healing waters, Jesus commanded him to get up, take up his bed, and walk.

The Church gives us this account of one of the great healing miracles of the Lord in the Easter season in order to illustrate Christ's victory over sin and death. The healing of the paralytic is a symbol of the renewal of the life of all humanity through the Resurrection of Christ. Indeed, some of the Fathers describe this event as a foreshadowing of the waters of baptism in which healing is offered to us all.

We are all spiritually sick, and this has repercussions on us in various ways, many of which we are not even conscious of. Jesus Christ came to heal us, so that we may have fullness of life in Him. The Church has been likened to a hospital, for it is the place where sick people come to be healed. This healing does not always occur instantly, but is usually a gradual process.

We should note that Jesus Christ asks the paralytic man if he wants to be healed. God never forces Himself on us, nor does He heal us against our will. We need to recognize our need for healing, which is where a life of repentance begins. We also need to be active participants in this healing process. But through a life of prayer and repentance, through listening to God's Word and participating in the Sacraments, we too can come to share in the victory of Christ over the consequences of sin and death.



O Lord, the pool did not cure the Paralysed Man, but your word renewed him, nor did his sickness of so many years hinder it, for the force of your voice was shown to be sharper; and he cast off the weight so hard to carry and carried the burden of his bed as a witness to the multitude of your mercies; glory to you.

From Matins for the Sunday of the Paralytic

The Mystery of Repentance

A series on the meaning of Confession

We have looked at the sacraments of Baptism, Chrismation, and the Eucharist, and we now come to the sacrament of Confession, or of Penance or Repentance, as it is also known.



We saw that Baptism is “for the remission of sin” – it cleanses us from all the sins that we have committed before Baptism. Yet we continue to sin, for, as the text of the Divine Liturgy notes, “there is no man who shall live and sin not.” Although the Mystery of Repentance developed gradually and was used in different ways in the early Church, and continues to take different forms today, it came to be understood as a “Second Baptism,” for in it the sins that we have committed after Baptism are forgiven.

However, we should be careful that we don’t understand the forgiveness of sins in a legalistic or magical manner. In an Orthodox understanding, sin is fundamentally sickness – it is that which keeps us from being the whole people whom God created us to be. And so forgiveness is not so much simply

being let off the consequences of our sins, but is rather the healing of the root causes of that sickness.

Repentance lies at the heart of the Christian life. At the very beginning of Jesus’ ministry we hear Him calling people to repentance. This repentance or conversion is a life-long process that means turning around and allowing ourselves to be transformed by Christ – not just as an intellectual act of the will, but in the depths of our being. And the Mystery, or Sacrament, of Confession is one of the means that the Church gives us to help us on this path of repentance.



And Christ Himself, addressing the whole human race, said: “Come to me all you who labour and are burdened, and I will give you rest...”

His invitation is one of kindness, His goodness is beyond description...

And He sees whom He calls! Those who have spent their strength in breaking the law, those who are burdened with their sins, those who can no longer lift up their heads, those who are filled with shame, those who can no longer speak out. And why does He call them? Not to demand an accounting, nor to hold court. But why? To relieve them of their pain, to take away their heavy burden. For what could ever be a heavier burden than sin? ... I shall refresh you who are weighed down by sin, He says, and you who are bent down as if under a burden; I shall grant you remission of your sins. Only come to Me!

Saint John Chrysostom

The Feast of Mid-Pentecost

This coming Wednesday is the feast of Mid-Pentecost, where Christ “in the middle of the feast” teaches about His saving mission and offers to all “the waters of immortality.”

This feast occurs halfway between Pascha and Pentecost and both recalls the joy of Easter and also anticipates the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, focusing us on the central themes of the entire period.

The Church gave us the first two Sundays after Pascha to remove any possible lingering doubts about the truth of the Resurrection in order that we can receive the living water that only the risen Lord can give. With the Sunday of the Paralytic we realize our need for healing, but are also introduced to the theme of water. Next week we find ourselves at Jacob’s well with the Samaritan woman and finally at the pool of Siloam with the blind man.

During this period we hear about the “living water” that only the Lord Himself can give, and we learn that it is He Himself who is this Living Water, of which we partake through the baptismal waters and the Cup of Life. This anticipation reaches its fulfilment on the day of Pentecost when we hear the words: “If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink.”



Mid-way in the feast, refresh my thirsty soul with the flowing waters of piety. For You cried out to all, O Saviour, "Let him who thirsts come to me and drink." You, O Christ our God, are the Fountain of Life, glory to You.

Apolytikon of the Feast

On Mid-Pentecost we hear the call of the Lord: ‘whosoever thirsteth, let him come to Me and drink’ (John 7:37). If this is so, then let us all run to Him. Whatever you thirst for - so long as it is not contrary to the spirit of the Lord - you will find relief in Him. If you thirst for knowledge, run to the Lord, for He is the one and only light, enlightening every man. If you thirst for cleansing from sin and quenching of the flames of your conscience, run to the Lord, for He tore asunder the handwriting of our sins upon the Cross. If you thirst for peace in your heart, run to the Lord, for He is the treasury of all good, Whose abundance will teach you to forget all deprivations and despise all earthly good, so as to be filled with Him alone. If you need strength, He is almighty. If you need glory, His glory surpasses the world. If you desire freedom, He gives true freedom. He will resolve all of our doubts, loose the bonds of our passions, dispel all our troubles and difficulties, will enable us to overcome all obstacles, temptations and intrigues of the enemy, and will make smooth the path of our spiritual life. Let us all run to the Lord!

Saint Theophan the Recluse