

Continued from page 2...

you see now how close this union is, and how God providentially created it from a single nature? He permitted Adam to marry Eve, who was more than sister or daughter; she was his own flesh! God caused the entire human race to proceed from this one point of origin. He did not, on the one hand, fashion woman independently from man, otherwise man would think of her as essentially different from himself. Nor did He enable woman to bear children without man; if this were the case she would be self-sufficient. Instead, just as the branches of a tree proceed from a single trunk, He made the one man Adam to be the origin of all mankind, both male and female, and made it impossible for men and women to be self-sufficient. Later, He forbade men to marry their sisters or daughters, so that our love would not be limited to members of our families, and withdrawn from the rest of the human race. All of this is implied in Christ's words: "He who made them from the beginning made them male and female" (Matt. 19:4).

Saint John Chrysostom



**12 July 2015 is the
Sixth Sunday of Matthew**

Matins Gospel: Luke 24:36-53

Epistle: Romans 12:6-14

Gospel: Matthew 9:1-8

Resurrectional Apolytikion:

Let us worship the Word, O ye faithful, praising Him that with the Father and the Spirit is co-beginningless God, Who was born of a pure Virgin that we all be saved; for He was pleased to mount the Cross in the flesh that He assumed, accepting thus to endure death. And by His glorious rising, He also willed to resurrect the dead.

Seasonal Kontakion:

O Protection of Christians that cannot be put to shame, mediation unto the creator most constant: O despise not the voices of those who have sinned; but be quick, O good one, to come unto our aid, who in faith cry unto thee: Hasten to intercession and speed thou to make supplication, O thou who dost ever protect, O Theotokos, them that honour thee.

Readings and saints for this week:

Monday: Hebrews 2:2-10; Matthew 13:54-58
Synaxis of Archangel Gabriel; Righteous Stephen

Tuesday: Romans 16:1-16; Matthew 14:1-13
Aquila of the 70; Joseph the Confessor

Wednesday: 1 Corinthians 13:11-14; 14:1-5; Matthew 17:24-27; 18:1-4
Martyr Julitta & Cyricus; Vladimir, Equal to the Apostles

Thursday: 1 Corinthians 7:24-35; Matthew 15:12-21
Hieromartyr Athenogenes; Virgin Martyr Julia

Friday: Galatians 3:23-29; 4:1-5; Mark 5:24-34
Great Martyr Marina; Veronika & Speratos the Martyrs

Saturday: Romans 12:1-6; Matthew 10:37-42, 11:1
Emilian; Martyrs Paul, Thea & Oualentine



Evangelion

A Bulletin of Orthodox Christian Faith

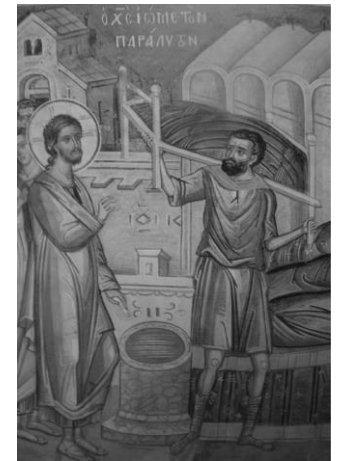
12 July 2015

Your Sins are Forgiven

In today's Gospel we hear Saint Matthew's account of how Jesus Christ healed a paralytic man. When this man was brought to Him, He scandalized the scribes by telling him that His sins were forgiven. Showing that He knew their thoughts, Christ asked them: "Which is easier to say: 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'?" And then He continued: "But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins" – He then said to the paralytic – 'Rise, take up your bed and go home.'"

This encounter reveals who Jesus truly is. St John Chrysostom points out that, by reading what was in the scribes' minds, Jesus shows Himself as truly God. Moreover, as they themselves point out, it is only God who can forgive sins. They are scandalized precisely because, by claiming to forgive sins, Jesus Christ is revealing Himself as truly God.

But this encounter also reveals the true nature of the healing that we need. St John Chrysostom continues by pointing out that, if anyone might have been annoyed, it was the paralytic man. He had come to Christ to be healed, but instead had had his sins forgiven. However, far from being annoyed, he recognizes Christ's authority, surrendering himself to the One who heals. And, in this, he is healed in both body and soul. We see here that spiritual and physical healing are closely related. While the links between sin and illness are not clear cut – and Jesus elsewhere denies that a man's illness is a result of his sins (John 9:1-3) – there is a link between sin and suffering. When we come to God with what we think is our need, we need to be open to Him revealing our true need, for the healing that He offers us is often far greater than what we are aware we need.



The paralytic is a descendent of the original man, Adam.
In one person, Christ, all the sins of Adam are forgiven.

Saint Hilary of Poitiers

What God has Joined Together

A series on the meaning of Christian Marriage

We have seen that the sacrament of Marriage is one of the means that God gives us to grow in holiness. While not all people are called to marriage, we are not created as isolated individuals, but are all meant to be in communion with others. This communion is lived out in different ways, but one of its key characteristics is that we are called to serve others, to be accountable to them, and to take their needs into account and not simply our own.



A school of holiness

For those who are married, their marriage partnership and family is their primary community. This is the “school of holiness” where love is tested in the nitty gritty of daily life and where we learn to transcend our own desires and needs. All human relationships call us out of our centeredness on ourselves, but marriage does this in a particularly powerful and absolute way. It means committing oneself for life to one other person and to a relationship that will expose one in the depths of one’s being, and with no escape when things are not going so well.

It is therefore not surprising that the Church Fathers spoke of marriage as a form of martyrdom and that the crowns with which the couple are crowned during the marriage ceremony also represent the crowns of martyrdom. For marriage is a relationship that involves dying to oneself and one’s own desires and giving oneself in self-emptying love to another. This is why Saint Paul compares the relationship between a husband and a wife to the relationship between Christ and His Church. For Christ loved the Church so much that He was prepared to pour out His whole life for her, and it is this self-giving love that a married couple is called to emulate. (Ephesians 5:25)



A certain wise man, when enumerating which blessings are the most important included “*a wife and husband who live in harmony*” (Sir. 25:1). In another place he emphasized this: “*A friend or a companion never meets one amiss, but a wife with her husband is better than both.*” (Sir. 40:23). From the beginning God in His providence has planned this union of man and woman, and has spoken of the two as one: male and female He created them (Gen. 1:27), and there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:28). There is no relationship between human beings so close as that of husband and wife, if they are united as they ought to be. When blessed David was mourning for Jonathan, who was of one soul with him, what comparison did he use to describe the loftiness of their love? Your love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women (II Sam. 1:26). The power of this love is truly stronger than any passion; other desires may be strong, but this one alone never fades. This love (eros) is deeply planted within our inmost being. Unnoticed by us, it attracts the bodies of men and women to each other, because in the beginning woman came forth from man, and from man and woman other men and women proceed. Can

Continued on page 4

By This You Will Show Mercy

Saint Dorotheos of Gaza warns us never to say that we have nothing to give:

No one can say, “I am poor and I have nothing to give as alms.”

For if you cannot give as much as those rich men who put their gifts in the treasury, then give the two pennies like that poor widow and God will receive this from you as more than the gifts of those rich men (cf. Mk. 12:42, Lk. 21:2).

And if you do not have even this much you have strength and you can show mercy to your infirm brother by serving him.

You cannot do even this? Then you can comfort your brother by a word. Show him mercy by words, and you will hear what has been said, *Lo, is not a word better than a gift?* (Sir. 18:17).

And if you cannot help him even by words, then, when your brother becomes angry at you for something you can show him mercy and endure him during the time of his disturbance, seeing that he is tempted by the common enemy, and instead of speaking a word to him that disturbs him all the more, you can remain silent.

By this you will show him mercy, delivering his soul from the enemy. And when your brother sins before you, have mercy on him and forgive him his sin, so that you also might receive forgiveness from God; for it is said, *forgive, and ye shall be forgiven* (Luke 6:37).

You can show your mercy for the soul of your brother by forgiving him for his sin against you, for God gave us the authority, if we wish, to forgive each other the transgressions which transpire amongst us.

In this way, not having any means to show mercy to his body, you have had mercy on his soul. What mercy or alms could be greater than mercy toward his soul? As the soul is more precious than the body, so mercy shown to the soul is greater than that shown to the body.

Therefore no one can say, “I cannot give alms or show mercy,” for everyone can show mercy according to his strength and the disposition of his soul.

Do not fall into despair because of stumbling. I do not mean that you should not feel contrition for them, but that you should not think them incurable. For it is more expedient to be bruised than dead. There is, indeed, a Healer for the man who has stumbled, even He Who on the Cross asked that mercy be shown to His crucifiers, He Who pardoned His murders while He hung on the Cross. ‘All manner of sin,’ He said, ‘and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men,’ that is, through repentance.

Saint Isaac the Syrian

