

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST ORTHODOX CHURCH

Orthodox Church of America
A Parish of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey

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May 23, 2021

Sunday of Paralytic

- 9:10 am - Hours
- 9:30 am - Divine Liturgy
Acts 9:32-42 John 5:1-15

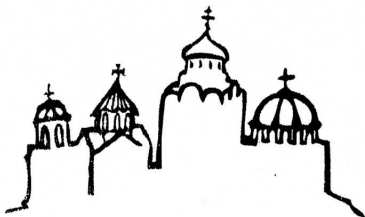
Schedule of Services

Saturday, May 29

- 5:00 pm - Great Vespers

Sunday, May 30
Samaritan Woman

- 9:10 am - Hours
- 9:30 am - Divine Liturgy



WEEKLY BIBLE MESSAG

On the third Sunday after Holy Pascha, we hear the story of Jesus healing the Paralytic at Bethsaida (John 5:1-15). This passage is taken from what Biblical scholars have designated as "The Book of Signs," i.e. John 1:19 through John 12. It precedes "The Book of Glory," which deals with Christ's Paschal Mystery (His passion, death and rising). The Book of Signs occupies much of John's Gospel because, as Fr. Joseph Fitzmeyer notes: "It is the part of the Gospel where the Word reveals Himself to the world and is not accepted other than by His own."

In John's Gospel, "sign" is also used to mean "miracle." Unlike the Gospels of Mark, Matthew, and Luke, John does not record very many miracles of Jesus. There are only seven listed in John, but each tells us very special things we need to know about Jesus. The seven are:

- Changing the water into wine at the wedding at Cana (John 2:1-11)
- Healing the royal officer's son (John 4:46-54)
- Healing the paralytic at the pool of Bethsaida in Jerusalem.
- Feeding the Five Thousand (John 6:5-14)
- Walking on the Water (John 6:16-21)
- Healing the man born blind (John 9:1-7)
- Raising Lazarus from the dead (John 11:1-45)

Each of these "signs" underscores and illustrates what is the "Mission Verse" of John's Gospel, its over-arching theme: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16) Jesus enters the precincts of the Temple, near the five pillars, where a great pool of water stands. The pool's name is Bethsaida, or "house of kindness and mercy" or "place of outpouring." Dozens of sick crowded the portico waiting for the "waters to be stirred," yet one person came within Jesus' attention—a man who had been paralyzed for some 38 years. Jesus asks directly "Do you want to be healed? The man answers "I have no one to help me into the waters.

The Lord responds "Rise, take up your mat, and walk." After disputing with the Jews about the lawfulness of healing and carrying his mat on the Sabbath, Jesus meets the man in the Temple later and tells him "You are well; do not sin anymore, so nothing worse happens to you." These being the major elements of the story, there are three lessons we can take from John's passage.

38 Years is a Long Time

Imagine being paralyzed for 38 years. At the paralytic's time, so much of life and the world were cut off to him, so many opportunities were closed. His potential was stifled the longer he couldn't move. Living 24/7 with this physical handicap caused frustration, anxiety, and, I'm certain, depression. To survive those years, he needed genuine patience, what in Biblical terms was "long-suffering."

Ironically, the origin of the word "patience" came in the 12th century from the Latin "pati" or "patientia," meaning willing to bear adversities, or calm endurance of misfortune. The paralytic knew well of that endurance. St. John Chrysostom praises the paralytic for his indefatigable determination in the face of chronic suffering: "Having come across the incident of the paralytic who lay upon his bed beside the pool, we discovered a rich and large treasure, not delving into the ground, but by diving into his heart. We found patience and hope towards God, which is more valuable than any kind of jewel or source of wealth."

When Jesus lived, there were actually few cures for diseases and patiently enduring suffering was seen as somehow heroic and godly. It is more difficult for us today to be patient in the face of suffering and illness, as we expect immediate and instant relief. With the dozens and dozens of pill and prescription ads on television, it is as if pain and suffering are not to be part of the human experience. Though suffering is never desired in Holy Orthodoxy, and though the Church Fathers unanimously teach that illness and suffering do NOT have their origin in God, when it occurs we are asked to endure and be patient. It can be a profitable teacher.

He hung on to hope and never let it die, as day after day he gazed at that pool. Jesus' zeroing in on him above all the others waiting to be healed was no accident. In suffering or illness, Jesus zeros in on us as well. In life, how I handle suffering and sickness, be it physical, psychological/emotional, or spiritual? Do I do my best to hold on to hope through prayer? Do I seek out others to support me, or do I try to walk in the shadows alone? Can I see suffering and illness as "teachable moments"—not about disease but about myself, not about living in some pain-free utopia but about enduring, waiting in hope, meeting Christ in the "pool" of my heart?

Intercessory Prayers

We pray for all our fellow parishioners, and we pray especially for those who are incapable of being with us in church. Please keep in your prayers our Brothers and Sisters in Christ: Genevieve Bobenko, Barbara Bogart, Michael Bzik, Mary Ann Dolak, Barbara Kazy, Margaret Kovalycsik, Kathleen Lazorczyk, Dennis Maixner, Marian Nagel, Helen Rahnefeld, Anna Rozanovich, Maryann Sytagen, Patricia Galley.

Announcement

◆ On June 6th Matushka Svitlana and Fr. Maryan would like to invite all of our parishioners for social hour and some coffee time in our Rectory back yard all weather depending. If we will have rough weather we will reschedule to the following week June 13th.

◆ Giving thanks to God. St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary hosted joyous Commencement Exercises last weekend for the graduating classes of 2020 and 2021. The Seminary hosted commencement for both classes this year. As last spring's ceremony had to be postponed due to pandemic-related restrictions. The two classes were made up of fifty-one men and women from a multitude of Orthodox jurisdictions and other churches—thirty-three from the class of 2020, and twenty-two from the class of 2021 (four graduates obtained two degrees, one from each year).

Congratulations to the graduates, and may God grant them many years!

◆ With open arms and hearts, we welcome all of our visitors and guests: we are delighted you have joined us to worship the Lord this day. Contact Father Maryan or either one will gladly provide you with any info. Thanks for being here: we look forward to seeing you again. Until then, may Christ bless you always.

