



4TH SUNDAY OF PASCHA SUNDAY OF THE PARALYTIC

The fourth Sunday of Pascha in the Orthodox Church is recognized as the Sunday of the paralytic. In fact, on this day the Church celebrates the memory of one of many miracles of Christ, where Christ heals a man who had been sick for thirty-eight years. This particular event is described for us by evangelist John (5:1-15).

In the Gospel according to John, we read that by the **Sheep Gate*** in Jerusalem was a pool called Bethesda. Next to the pool were many sick and suffering people who were waiting for water to start stirring, and then, whoever first entered the pool was cured of his illness. The paralytic, about whom we are talking today, was paralyzed for thirty-eight years. For all those long years, he was not able to be the first who comes to the pool when the water was stirring by the descend of an angel. In this Gospel story, we hear that Christ comes to this man and asks him: "Do you want to be made well?" (John 5:6). The paralytic responds by saying that there is no man who can place him in the pool. However, Jesus was not there to help the paralytic to enter the pool. Instead, he performed the miracle Himself by saying the words: "Rise, take up your bed and walk." (John 5:8). The paralytic immediately was healed. He was able to stand and take his bed. Jesus told him to go and not to sin anymore.

Why do you think our Church remembers and celebrates this story about the paralytic in the **Paschal season****? Before this week, we had the Sunday of

Thomas and Myrrhbearing women. We can easily understand that these two events are connected to Pascha because they both occurred after the Resurrection of Christ. But how about the Sunday of the paralytic?

In order to understand it, we have to know more about the event of Pascha and what usually occurred on that glorious day in the early Church. In that time, people who were preparing for the Holy Sacrament of baptism (catechumens) were baptized on Pascha. Hence, baptism was strongly connected to Pascha. That can explain why all the Sunday Gospels in Paschal seasons, that we hear in our Church after the Sunday of Myrrhbearing women, are focused on water. Therefore, this interpretation can be applied to the story of the paralytic, who speaks with Christ next to the water. The water can be taken as an echo of the baptism, where the descent of the angel into the pool foreshadowed the spiritual and transformative power of Christian baptism.

*The Sheep Gate - the gate by which the offerings or sacrifices were brought into the Temple.

**The Paschal season - a festal season in the liturgical year of the Orthodox Church that focuses on celebrating the event of the glorious Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

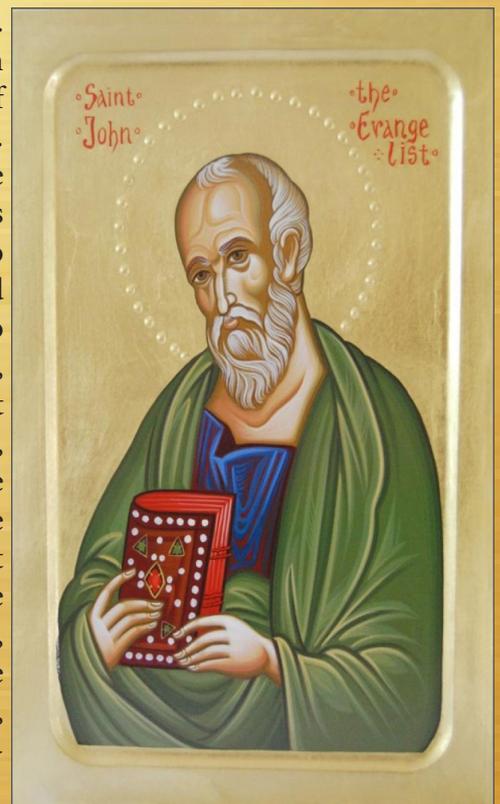
The Epistle According to the Acts of the Apostles (9:32-42)



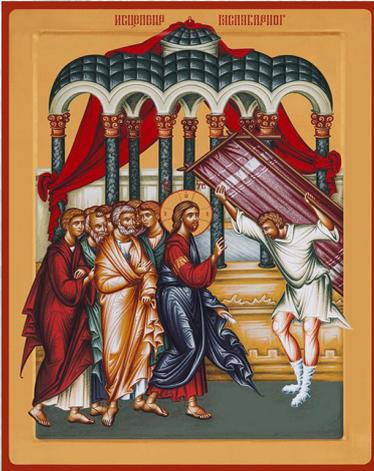
Now it came to pass, as Peter went through all parts of the country, that he also came down to the saints who dwelt in Lydda. There he found a certain man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years and was paralyzed. And Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus the Christ heals you. Arise and make your 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.

The Gospel According to John (5:1-15)

After this 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.



THE ICON OF THE PARALYTIC



In our most recent essay about the icons, we talked about one technique, which we used to explain the icon of the Myrrhbearing women. Do you recall what the name of that technique was? We called it “Mimesis,” which we use to recognize persons, objects, or the actions on the icon because we already experienced them in our life. In this essay, we will write about two new techniques that can accompany Mimesis in a closer understanding of the icon. These techniques are called “hieratic” and “narrative.”

Before we start with applying two new elements, we should discuss what hieratic and narrative represent. They both are characteristics of saints depicted on the icon. A hieratic person is usually in the center of the icon. Furthermore, it always seems that the hieratic person on the icon looks directly to you when you approach the icon. You can imagine the icon of Christ or Lady Theotokos, who always look straight to you. On the other hand, a narrative person can be recognized by its gestures or movements towards another person or object on the icon.

Now, let see how we can apply these two techniques in our interpretation of the icon of the paralytic. On the icon of the paralytic we can notice a few people. By using “Mimesis” we can immediately recognize Christ because He makes a sign with His right hand. This particular sign symbolizes peace. That reminds us of a bishop who, at the Divine Liturgy, also blesses the faithful people with his right hand. Additionally, we can see that Christ and the paralytic (which we recognize from the Gospel of John) are both depicted as narrative. We notice that because they are making gestures towards one another. Christ is blessing the paralytic, and the paralytic bows towards Christ, carrying his bed. Hence, their movement supports the idea that both of them are narrative. Based on the information provided above, we can conclude that the icon explains us the story about Christ, who heals the paralytic. In the background, we see the pool with five porches. In the front there is Christ who, followed by His disciples, blesses the paralytic who has been cured and able to stand and hold his bed. The paralytic bows to Jesus as the sign of reverence and gratitude for the miracle that happened. Hence, the icon of the paralytic brings closer the story of this event, to us and all faithful Christians.



LITURGICAL HYMNS



Resurrectional Troparion – Tone 3

Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad! For the Lord has shown His strength with His arm! He has trampled down death by death! He has become the Firstborn of the dead! He has delivered us from the depths of hell. And has granted to the world great mercy!

<https://youtu.be/tlZOksJKN-8>

Resurrection Troparion - Tone 3

a) Let the heav - ens re - joice and let the earth be glad!

b)

c) For the Lord has shown strength with His arm!

d) He has tramp - led down death by death!

e) He has be - come the first born of the dead!

f) He has de - liv - ered us from the depths of hell,

g) and has grant - ed to the world great mer - cy!





The Paschal Kontakion – Tone 8

Thou didst descend into the tomb, o Immortal. Thou didst destroy the power of death. In victory didst thou arise, o Christ God, proclaiming rejoice to the Myrrh-bearing women, granting peace to thine apostles, and bestowing Resurrection on the fallen.

https://youtu.be/74s_JjvbPjI

The Paschal Kontakion - Tone 8

Thou didst de - scend in - to the tomb, O Im - mor - tal,

Thou didst de - stroy the pow - er of death.

In vic - to - ry didst Thou a - rise, O

Christ God, pro - claim - ing "Re - joice!" to

the myrrh - bear - ing wo - - - men,

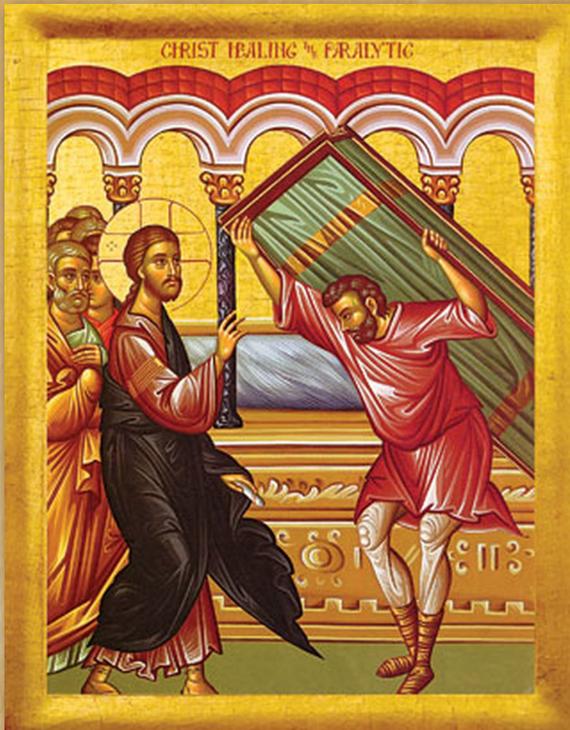
grant - ing peace to Thy a - pos - - - tles,

and be - stow - ing re - sur - rec - - - tion

on the fall - - - - en.

CHRIST AND THE PARALYTIC

as the extraordinary example of Christianity

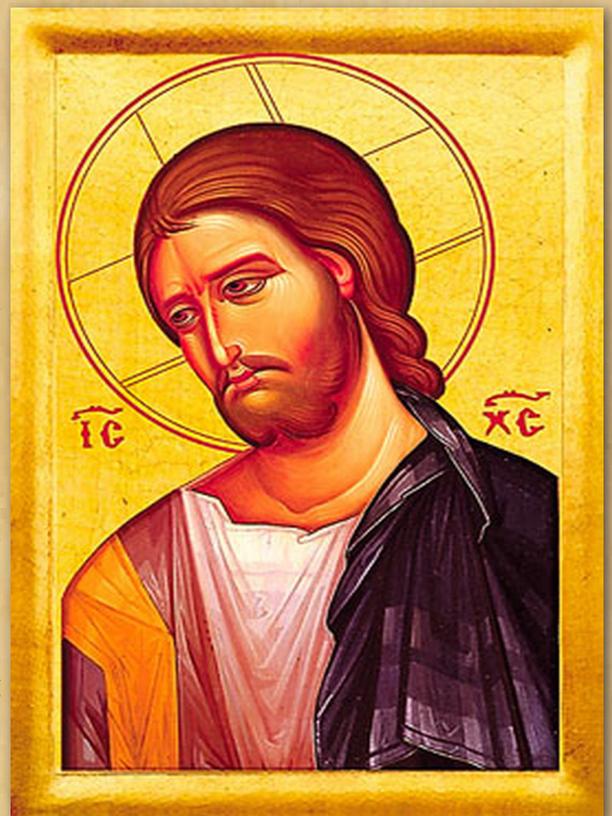


Describing the paralytic, who, with patience and faith, suffered for 38 years, the Gospel of John reveals two secrets, according to the interpretation of our holy Bishop Nicholai Velimirovich. The first secret is that the sick man, within himself, knew the reason for his illness. The real reason was his personal sin, which we know because Christ told him to go and not to sin anymore. The second secret is revealed through Christ's words, "Rise, take up your bed and walk." (John 5:8). This particular secret was about Christ and His heavenly love for humankind. Why are these two secrets, now revealed, so essential for us Christians today?

Thinking about the paralytic and his suffering, both physical and spiritual, Saint Nicholai sees a hero in him. The paralytic shows great virtues of patience, hope, and faith. Despite his long-term illness, he does not cease to believe that the miracle will happen and that he will be healed. When the miracle does occur, the paralytic does not want to keep his faith to himself, but instead, he announces to everybody what happened so that their faith and glorification of God can be greater.

On the other hand, Christ teaches us about humility and His love for humankind and the world. After He healed the paralytic, He goes away from the people to show us a valuable lesson: good deeds should be done out of pure love for our neighbors, not for our glory nor for admiration from onlookers. In this way, we build humility within ourselves and become true Christians.

Can we conclude now why the secrets about the paralytic and Christ are so important to us? It is because we, as Christians, need to develop the characteristics of both persons in ourselves. We need to be as the paralytic when it comes to patience and faith in God. Every one of us at some point has a problem in school or at home, likely smaller than the difficulties that the paralytic faced, but we have to believe that God is with us and that He will help us to overcome our troubles. From this kind of faith flows patience. On the other hand, Christ's love for us should be something we harbor towards our parents, relatives, and friends. Even when they do something that we do not like, we have to be like Christ and forgive them because they can in the future, as the paralytic, acknowledge their mistake, repent and even show their love towards us.



WORDFIND



NARRATIVE
JOHN
PARALYTIC
HIERATIC
ANGEL
PASCHA
SABBATH

P	A	R	A	L	Y	T	I	C
W	S	A	H	G	Z	I	P	P
R	A	P	A	S	C	H	A	J
J	B	Y	E	M	V	R	G	O
H	B	H	R	B	K	T	P	H
K	A	T	A	U	I	P	V	N
O	T	K	T	G	O	F	I	B
S	H	S	I	A	N	G	E	L
F	X	S	C	N	F	L	E	Q
N	A	R	R	A	T	I	V	E

FILL OUT THE MISSING WORDS OF CHURCH HYMNS

Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad! For the Lord has shown His strength with His arm! He has trampled down death by death! He has become the F_____ of the dead! He has delivered us from the depths of hell. And has granted to the world great mercy!

By Your divine intercession, O Lord, as You raised up the p_____ of old, so raise up my soul, paralyzed by sins and thoughtless acts; so that being saved I may sing to You: "Glory to Your power, O compassionate C_____!"

Thou didst descend into the tomb, o Immortal. Thou didst destroy the power of death. In victory didst thou arise, o Christ God, proclaiming rejoice to the M_____ women, granting peace to thine apostles, and bestowing R_____ on the fallen.



TEST

YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. Which Sunday we call the Sunday of the paralytic?

- A) Third
- B) Fourth
- C) Sixth

2. How many years the paralytic suffered from his illness?

- A. Twenty-six years
- B. Thirty-eight years
- C. Forty years

3. What was the name of the Pool in Jerusalem?

- A. Jordan
- B. Siloam
- C. Bethesda

4. What did the paralytic take when he stood up?

- A. His bed
- B. His shoes
- C. Lap top

5. Which Holy Sacrament is strongly connected with Pascha?

- A. Priesthood
- B. Holy Unction
- C. Baptism

6. Which of the following techniques, in the section about the icon, we introduced? (There are multiple correct answers)

- A. Hieratic
- B. Zones
- C. Narrative
- D. Recension
- E. Mimesis

ANSWERS:

- 1. A
- 2. B
- 3. C
- 4. A
- 5. C
- 6. A+C.



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