

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



22 May 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, 23 May: Acts 10:1-16; John 6:56-69
Michael, Bp. of Synnada; Mary the Myrrhbearer & wife of Cleopas

Tuesday, 24 May: Acts 10:21-33; John 7:1-13
Symeon the Stylite; Saint Vincent of Lerins

Wednesday, 25 May: Luke 7:17-30; 2 Corinthians 4:6-15; John 7:14-30
4th Wednesday after Pascha - Mid-Pentecost; Third Finding of the Precious Head of St. John the Baptist; Therapon the Hieromartyr, Bishop of Cyprus

Thursday, 26 May: 1 Corinthians 4:9-16; John 8:12-20
Carpos & Alphaeus of the 70; Martyr Alexander of Thessalonica

Friday, 27 May: Acts 10:44-48; 11:1-10; John 8:21-30
Hieromartyr Helladius; John the Russian Confessor

Saturday, 28 May: Acts 12:1-11; John 8:31-42
Martyr Eutychius; Nikitas, Bishop of Chalcedon



Evangelion

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Take Up your Bed and Walk!

Today, on the Sunday of the Paralytic, the Church commemorates the healing of the paralytic man at the pool of Bethesda. This paralysed man 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 Christ 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. As Christians, we see the healing of the paralytic as a symbol of the renewal of the life of all humanity through the resurrection of Christ.

Today's Gospel is one of the few places where Jesus Christ makes a connection between sin and illness, when He tells the man who has been healed to "Sin no more." Not all illness is caused by sin, but we know that there can be a connection between spiritual illness and bodily illness, and it seems that this was the case here.



But, whether we are physically ill or not, we are all spiritually sick and this affects us in many ways that we may not even be conscious of. Sin is not so much the breaking of laws as a sickness that makes us unable of doing what we truly desire to do. It was to heal us of this sin that Jesus Christ took our reality on Himself in His death on the Cross, and, through His resurrection, opened for us the path to healing. That is why we can call out to Him: "Heal my soul which has been ailing for many years as You healed the paralytic."

By your divine presence, Lord, raise my soul, grievously paralysed by sins of every kind and by unnatural deeds, as you also raised the Paralytic of old, that saved I may cry to You: O merciful Christ, glory to your might.

Kontakion for the Sunday of the Paralytic

The Living Water of the Holy Spirit

by Saint Cyril of Jerusalem

The water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of living water, welling up into eternal life. (John 7:38)

This is a new kind of water, a living, leaping water, welling up for those who are worthy. But why did Christ call the grace of the Spirit water? Because all things are dependent on water; plants and animals have their origin in water. Water comes down from heaven as rain, and although it is always the same in itself, it produces many different effects, one in the palm tree, another in the vine, and so on throughout the whole of creation. It does not come down, now as one thing, now as another, but while remaining essentially the same, it adapts itself to the needs of every creature that receives it.



In the same way the Holy Spirit, whose nature is always the same, simple and indivisible, apportions grace to each person as He wills. Like a dry tree which puts forth shoots when watered, the soul bears the fruit of holiness when repentance has made it worthy of receiving the Holy Spirit.

Although the Spirit never changes, the effects of His action, by the will of God and in the name of Christ, are both many and marvelous.

The Spirit makes one person a teacher of divine truth, inspires another to prophesy, gives another the power of casting out devils, enables another to interpret Holy Scripture. The Spirit strengthens one person's self-control, shows another how to help the poor, teaches another to fast and lead a life of asceticism, makes another oblivious to the need of the body, trains another for martyrdom. His action is different in different people, but the Spirit Himself is always the same. *In each person, Scripture says, the Spirit reveals His presence in a particular way for the common good.*

The Spirit comes gently and makes Himself known by his fragrance. He is not felt as a burden, for He is light, very light. Rays of light and knowledge stream before Him as He approaches. The Spirit comes with the tenderness of a true friend and protector to save, to heal, to teach, to counsel, to strengthen, to console. The Spirit comes to enlighten the mind first of the one who receives Him, and then, through him, the minds of others as well.

As light strikes the eyes of one who comes out of darkness into the sunshine and enables that person to see clearly things he or she could not discern before, so light floods the soul of the one counted worthy of receiving the Holy Spirit and enables that person to see things beyond the range of human vision, things hitherto undreamed of.



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.”



At the midpoint of the Feast, O Saviour, water my thirsty soul with streams of true devotion. For you cried out to all: “Any who thirst, let them come to me, and let them drink!” O Source of life, Christ our God, glory to you!

Apolytikion for Mid-Pentecost

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