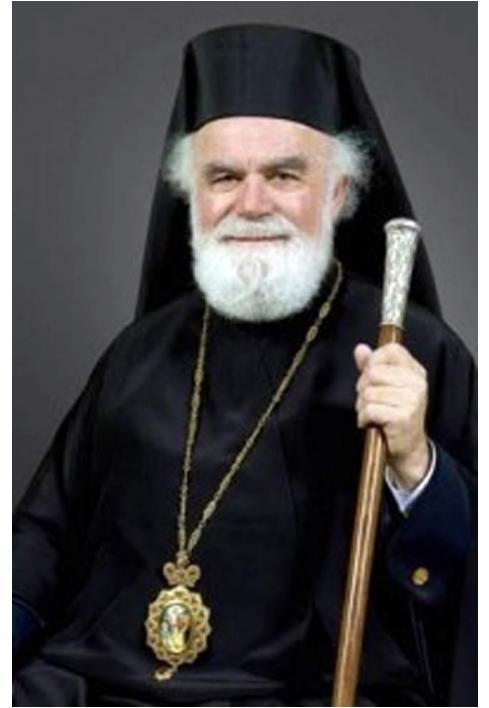


My Beloved Ones,

*ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΝΕΣΤΗ! Christ is Risen!*

As we continue through the beautiful Paschal period, this Sunday's Gospel returns us to the public ministry of Jesus; He has not yet been crucified and not yet resurrected. In fact, the Evangelist John tells us that the subject of this week's Gospel was one of the many instances which set the Pharisees and elders against Jesus; for He chose to perform this miracle on the Sabbath.

We read that Christ encounters a paralyzed man lying near the pool of Bethesda, a pool which is occasionally visited by an angel, granting health to the first person who enters its waters. This man, whose condition had afflicted him for 38 years, is seen by Christ, lying on his bed. Christ naturally asks the man if he wishes to be made well. The man, not realizing who he is speaking to, answers that he would—only he has no way to enter the pool, and when he tries others enter the water before him.



Christ however, is not simply content to offer this man assistance. He does not, for example, ask if the paralyzed man wishes to be brought into the pool; for surely this lonely individual could have been assisted by any number of the disciples who were with Jesus at that moment. Instead, Christ is speaking of a miracle greater than the passing blessing from one of God's angels. For with seven simple words, "Rise, take up your bed and walk," the man experiences the reality of coming face to face with God.

My brothers and sisters, much has been made of the physical reality of the miracle, but this story has a message for those who are able-bodied as well. Christ asks the paralytic, "Do you wish to be made well?" In this way, he speaks not simply to the person for whom the miracle is performed, but those who are paralyzed: paralyzed by grief; by fear; by loneliness; by sadness, or even indecision. The pools of Bethesda are like the creations of men: however blessed some of these technologies, therapies and pursuits may be (the passing of an angel to trouble our waters) they do not come from God alone. Only by entrusting our worries and cares to God, do we fully allow ourselves to be shaped and transformed through the peace which comes from knowing Him.

Another crucial aspect of this passage then is in the formulation of Christ's words. He does not say, "You are healed!" When He says, "Rise, take up your bed and walk," He does so, not only for the benefit of His disciples and the crowds that have gathered; He says this to demonstrate that after we have given our troubles and passions to God, we are called upon to carry on His work. We are meant to go forward and live our lives, as best as we are able; secure in our faith and belief in Jesus Christ.

**+ALEXIOS**

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