

My Beloved Ones,

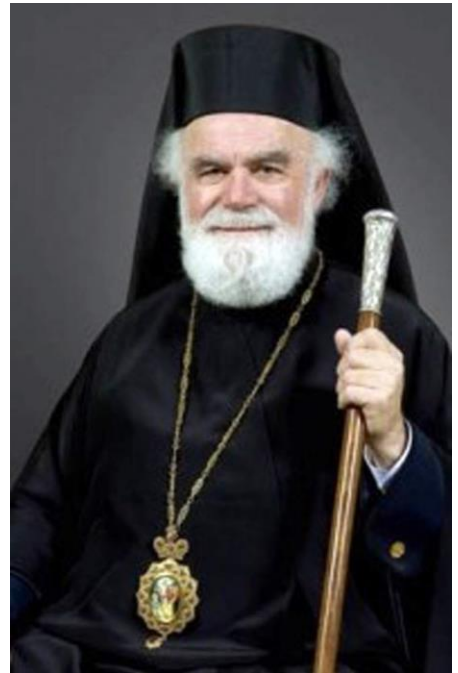
As we continue through the Pentecostarion (the 50 day period from Pascha until the coming of the Holy Spirit) this Sunday's passage, taken from the Gospel of St. John, tells of Christ's healing of the Paralytic. Through this miracle our Lord tries to impart lessons concerning both our bodies and our souls.

Many times, diseases come to us--not as a punishment from God—but because we are not careful concerning the sinful lives we are living. Therefore today we are going to examine the man paralyzed for thirty-eight years; as well as his statement, *“Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is troubled...”*

The pool this man refers to is the miraculous pool called Bethesda, where an angel was known to trouble the waters, healing whatever disease or infirmity afflicted the first person who entered the pool. This paralytic lived near the pool, waiting patiently like so many others for the moment—even though he had no one to assist him. And so many others were healed instead.

It is upon this scene, and a paralytic, that our Lord comes. Jesus Christ, who takes on all our pains as King and God, knew that this man has been paralyzed for thirty-eight years. And so He asks the Paralytic, *‘Do you want to be healed?’* (John 5:6) This question seems strange; surely we would not ask a sick person if they wish to be made well? Our Lord, however, knowing the hearts of all His creations, knows that the sickness of the Paralytic was a result of his sinful life. And of course, our Lord respects that gift of free will that God gave to us. Therefore, the Paralytic must make the decision of his own free will to repent of his sins, so that he can be cured. This is the reason our Lord asks him if he wishes to be made well.

The paralyzed man does not respond, yes or no. Neither does he complain. He only wishes to share his reality. *“Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is troubled, and while I am going another steps down before me.”* (John 5:7) This he says, without a spirit of envy towards those who were cured, but rather giving himself over to God's will, in humility and repentance. He says, in other words, *“I have been here so many years because I am without parents, siblings, or anyone to take care of me. Therefore, I did things that were wrong. And perhaps it is because of this that no one sees me, and so I not received the blessing from God.”*



Seeing his repentance and his confession, our Lord looks upon him with sympathy, and gives an order, “*Rise, take up your pallet, and walk.*” (John 5:8) Feeling the power of our Lord, the Paralytic’s nerves and muscles become stronger. He takes up his pallet and walks, giving glory to Almighty God.

Let us, however, analyze the phrase, ““*Sir, I have no man...*”” Indeed, it is simple enough to pass over, but it illustrates an important point. In our own society, many of us find ourselves helpless: without persons to confide in, and from whom we can receive advice. After two thousand years, we too see examples of the statement, “*I don’t have a man*”; whether this refers to children and parents, or among siblings. Everyone serves themselves as individuals. Seeking to fight for our individuals rights in today’s society, we often do not leave room to offer ourselves to others. This is why it is imperative that we Christians look to our Lord as the Power who has time for us: time to listen; time to understand; and to offer wisdom and strength.

For these things to happen, to have a relationship with Him, we must have faith. Of course, as our Creator who respects our freedom, our Lord is waiting for us to approach Him; to converse with Him; to share both our joys and sorrows. When we are with Jesus Christ we are never alone. I ask you to remember the beautiful story of a man who wished to cross a river. A stranger appeared, carrying him to the other side—but disappeared. The man, seeing only his own set of footprints cries out, “Lord, where were you when I was in need?” The Lord responds, “I was there; those footprints are mine as I carried you on my shoulders.”

I greet you once again with *ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΝΕΣΤΗ!* wishing you the best during this, the happiest time of our Ecclesiastical year! *ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΝΕΣΤΗ! Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!*

+ALEXIOS

Metropolitan of Atlanta