

**Putting our Trust in Christ**  
**Fr. Hector Firoglanis – Sunday, May 9, 2020**

Christ is Risen!

On this third Sunday after Pascha, the Sunday of the Paralytic, we read a story that on the surface looks like just another healing miracle of our Lord Jesus Christ. But a deeper look at today's Gospel reading reveals something about each of us... and what we ultimately put our trust in?

As a little child trusts in its mother to fulfill its every need, do we as adults place the same trust in God – who is not a simple spectator in our lives, but Who provides and cares for us as a loving Father?

As we reflect on today's Gospel reading, let us examine our souls and whether we truly **“trust in the Lord with all our heart”** (Proverbs 3:5).

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In today's Gospel reading, we are told that Jesus went up to Jerusalem. About 100 yards north of the temple area, near the Sheep Gate, Jesus went to a pool which had five porticoes or colonnades. Around this pool would be a varied multitude of people who were ill, blind, lame, and paralyzed, awaiting the stirring of the water in the pool.

The belief was that an angel would go at certain times to trouble the water, and the first person to go into the water after this stirring would be healed of their disease or infirmity.

It is here that Jesus meets a man by the pool who was paralyzed for 38 years. When the Lord asked him if he wanted to be healed, the man answered, **"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).**

In this man's mind, the pool was his only hope for salvation, and all his trust was focused there.

In St. John's narrative, the pool of water also symbolized the Jewish Law, the great rival to Christ in the hearts of the Jewish people and leaders. Just as the paralytic put his hope in the pool, the Jewish people were putting their hope of eternal life in the Mosaic Law.

Salvation for the Jews involved transferring their hope and attention from the Law to Christ, just as salvation for the paralytic involved transferring his attention from the pool to Jesus (Fr. Lawrence Farley, “Commentary on the Gospel of John).

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We all put our hope and trust in something. What is it that occupies our attention? What is it that we put our hope and security in today?

Is it the accumulation of wealth?

Is it modern science and medicine?

Is it the government and secular institutions that we place our trust for the protection and well being of our future and the future of our children?

On this Mother’s Day, let us think of the trust a child puts in its mother.

A child puts all its trust in a loving mother, knowing that such a mother will utilize whatever is needed for the protection and well-being of that child.

When Jesus says, “**Unless you change and become like little children, or you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven**” (Matthew 18:3), this is what He is talking about. Just as a child puts all of its trust in its mother to provide anything it needs, we also must put all of our trust in the Lord to provide what we need for our well-being and salvation.

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The paralytic, when he saw Jesus, hoped that He would offer to assist him to the pool during the supernatural troubling of the waters. Christ, however, would do no such thing. Instead, the Lord called for the man to stop putting his trust in the pool for his healing and salvation, and to look to Him instead.

It was the God-Man standing before him, the Lord Jesus Christ who was the source of salvation – not the pool. To prove this, all He said to the paralytic was, “**Arise, take up your pallet and walk**” (John 5:8).

The healing words took effect immediately, and the man immediately was made well, took up his bed, and walked.

It was no accident that this healing took place on the Sabbath, which was a violation of the letter of the Jewish Law... for just as the paralytic had waited many years to be

healed, Israel also had been waiting many centuries for the Messiah in order to be healed and saved from the paralysis of sin.

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Just as the paralytic and the Jews during the time of Christ, we put our trust in many things – even while we struggle, ultimately, to put our full trust in God.

- We trust the pilots who control the airplanes we fly in.
- Every day, we trust that the drivers in the opposing traffic lanes won't veer into our lane to cause a head on collision.
- Every day, we trust the food we eat that has been processed in some far away factory or in a restaurant kitchen we are not permitted to be in while our food is being prepared.
- We trust the doctors who prescribe our medicines and the pharmacists who dispense the medicines we take for ourselves and give to our children.
- We have to trust so much in order to get by and thrive in our everyday lives.

But, ultimately, as Orthodox Christians we put our trust in God...

- We put our trust in God and say a prayer to keep our pilots safe and in good health before we or our loved ones go on a flight.
- We put our trust in God and do our cross every time we get in the car: to keep us – and the drivers around us – alert and safe while we are driving.
- We put our trust in God and say a prayer before each meal for the food to be blessed, to nourish us, and to not harm us in any way. [Elder Efraim and organic food... Do your cross and God will make it organic].
- Before every surgery, we say a prayer for God to bless the hands of the physicians to whom He has given the talent to effect the cure of the ailing. We put our trust in God and pray for our doctors and caretakers to make the correct diagnosis, to make the best referrals for our needs, and prescribe the correct treatment for our healing.

Ultimately, God is in control of everything, which is why we must learn to put our trust in Him and pray to Him every day, before every meal, before every trip, during every illness, and before every important decision we make which will affect our lives and the lives of those for whom we are making a decision.

As we continue to struggle against the peril of the Coronavirus, we must continue to pray to God for the strength, courage, and divine Grace needed to overcome this plague.

Sadly, a few weeks ago During a [press conference on April 13](#), New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo contended that God had nothing to do with the notable decrease in COVID-19 cases across the state.

**“The number is down because we brought the number down,”** he told reporters. **“God did not do that. Faith did not do that. Destiny did not do that. A lot of pain and suffering did that,”** Cuomo, a professing Catholic, continued. **“That’s how it works. It’s math.**

We must be very careful to avoid such egotistical thinking that can become the new “pool” of the paralytic – the new Law of the Jewish people – in which modern man puts his trust in himself, in math and science, as the new source of mankind’s salvation.

We must beware of this kind of arrogance, as this virus, a mutation of this virus, or another virus or disaster altogether can come when we are most vulnerable and bring us all to our knees. If the current pandemic and trial we are going through hasn’t been enough to humble us and expose the illusion of human control and self-sufficiency that we so often put our trust in, then something worse could come our way.

Lest we forget those foreboding words of Christ to the healed paralytic at the end of today’s Gospel reading, after the Jewish leaders had interrogated him for carrying his bed on the Sabbath: **“See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you”** (John 5:14).

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We are more vulnerable than we think. This is hardly a time to gloat or to be overly proud of our human achievements. This is a time to repent for our sins, **“lest something worse come upon us.”**

The pool of the paralytic was not a bad thing, and the Jewish Law was not a bad thing. These were gifts from God delivered by angels for the benefit of us humans. But just as Christ taught the paralytic and the Jewish leaders not to put their hope and trust in the pool and the Law, we must be careful not to put our hope and trust in our economy, in our secular institutions, and in our modern advances in science and technology.

For although these things are from God for our benefit, we must never put our hope and trust in them as though these things are the source of our salvation.

On this Mother’s Day, let us think of the little child who puts its trust in the loving embrace of its mother. With this image in mind, let us repent, become like little children, and put our trust in God as our loving heavenly Father.

As St. Porphyrios says in his chapter on Divine Providence, which we will be studying this Wednesday evening: **“God provides for the smallest details of our lives; He loves us and protects us.”**

Although things around us appear to be uncertain and out of control, let us remember always that God is in total control, and as St. Paisios says, **“He will have the final word.”**

Let us, therefore, remain faithful and always put our trust in Christ, who ultimately is our only hope and our salvation. Amen.