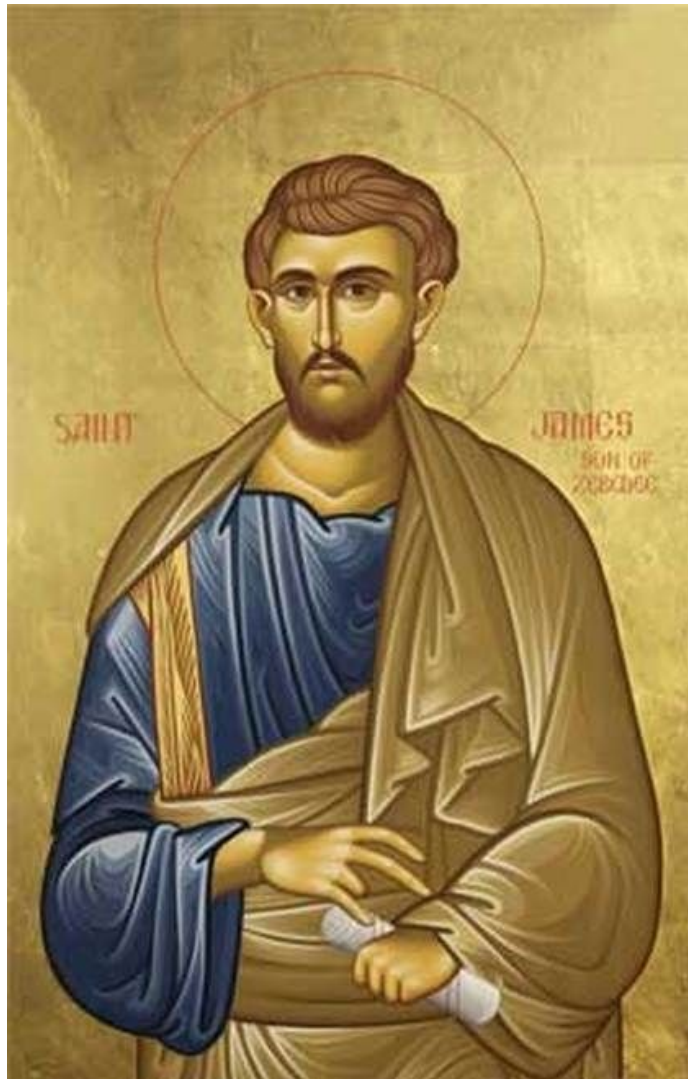


From the Divine Office for St. James (April 30)

The light of the Spirit came down upon you in the form of fire, O blessed Apostle James, and made you His instrument to put to flight the shadows of godlessness as you illumined the world with the radiance of your wise words, O eyewitness of Christ. (Vespers)

You are a fisherman of the mystical fish, O blessed one. Cast the net of your prayers to draw out from the sea of my sins my soul which is captive to the pleasures of this life. Running the rest of the course of my life without stumbling, may I celebrate your name and glorify the holy life you led, which allowed you on the mountain to see the Transfiguration of the Lord. (Orthros)



**FOURTH SUNDAY OF PASCHA
SUNDAY OF THE PARALYTIC
APRIL 30, 2023**



Our Lady of Perpetual Help Melkite Catholic Church
256 Hamilton St.
Worcester, MA 01604
Rectory: (508) 752-4174 Hall: (508) 755-2199
Email: olphmelkite@gmail.com
Rev. Bryan McNeil, Pastor
Cell: (774) 502-8547
Divine Liturgy: Sunday 10:00 AM

After “Blessed is the Kingdom... Christ is Risen from the dead and by His death He has trampled upon Death and has given life to those who were in the tombs (3 times)

Antiphon (Feast)

1: Shout joyfully to God, all you on earth.

O Son of God, who are risen from the dead, save us who sing to You, Alleluia

2: Sing praise to the glory of His name; proclaim His glorious praise.

Khallsna Ya-Bnallah, Ya Man qama min baynil-amwaat, nahnu muranneemeena Laka. Haleloueya.

3: Say to God how tremendous are Your deeds! For Your great strength, Your enemies fawn upon You.

O Son of God, who are risen from the dead, save us who sing to You, Alleluia!

Entrance Hymn

Priest: In Your assemblies bless the Lord our God, from the wellsprings of Israel.

People: O Son of God, who are risen from the dead, save us who sing to You, Alleluia!

Troparion of the Resurrection (Tone 3) pg.39

Let all in heaven rejoice, and all on earth be glad, for the Lord has exerted power with His arm: By death He has trampled upon Death and has become the firstborn from the dead. He has delivered us from the bosom of Hades and has granted to the world great mercy.

Troparion of the Apostle James (Tone 3)

O holy Apostle James, intercede with God all-merciful that He may grant us the remission of our sins.

Patronal Troparion (Tone 1) Pg. 15

In giving birth, you have preserved your virginity and in falling asleep you did not forsake the world, O Mother of God. You have passed to life being the Mother of Life. Through your intercession, save our souls from death.

Kondakion of Pascha (Tone 2)

Though You went down in the tomb, O immortal One, You overthrew the power of Hades and rose victorious, O Christ God, You greeted the ointment bearing women, saying: Rejoice! You gave peace to Your apostles, and to those who had fallen, resurrection.

We can become shortsighted or even blind to the gift of our baptism, remaining barren and unfruitful – in other words, paralyzed – without being committed to growing in virtue, knowledge, self-control and the rest. We may see this happen in the lives of some Christians who do not consider their baptism seriously, who rarely look to the Gospel, receive the Eucharist or even attend the Liturgy. They are blind to the gift of Christ and therefore paralyzed in the spiritual life. We see it in ourselves, when we cannot focus on the words we read or even the prayers we are saying, distracted by the concerns of daily life.

Paralysis and the Passions

As more philosophically-minded Greeks accepted Christ, they identified the signs of spiritual paralysis in terms of the classical passions: gluttony, lust, greed, anger, envy, sloth, pride and vainglory. A person who is focused on personal comforts (through food and drink, sex or material possessions) will find it difficult if not impossible to center on the spiritual life. If they attend church at all, they find their mind wandering back to the object of their passion.

A story is told about St Basil, the revered Fool for Christ, who confronted Tsar Ivan the Terrible one day because he was not at the Liturgy. Ivan protested that he was indeed in church for the service., Basil replied that the emperor’s body was in church, but his mind was on the Vorobiev hills (where he was having a palace built). When Basil died in 1557, the Tsar acted as one of his pallbearers.

It would be even harder for people ruled by their pride or vanity to look beyond themselves to God or others. Their piety dries up “like baked clay” (Ps 21:16), withered like a plant with too much sun and no water. This is why combatting the passions has been seen as fundamental to a committed Christian life since the dawn of monasticism in the third century.

In his Homily 37 on the Gospel of John, St John Chrysostom discusses the spiritual medicines necessary to combat the passions and other distractions from the Christian life: “The divine oracles [the Scriptures] are a treasury of all manner of medicines, so that whether it be needful to quench pride, to lull desire to sleep, to tread underfoot the love of money, to despise pain, to inspire confidence, to gain patience, from them one may find abundant resource.” The Scriptures held the medicine; the illnesses were the passions.

The Church as Healer

While the Scriptures portray the incarnate Christ as Healer of the man at Bethesda, it depicts the Body of Christ, the Church, as the source of Aeneas’ recovery. The Church is meant to be a therapeutic community in which Christ continues His healing work in our midst.

“Yesterday you were flung on a bed, exhausted and paralyzed, and you had no one to put you into the pool when the water should be troubled. Today you have Him, who is in one Person God and Man. You were raised up from your bed, and even carried your bed, publicly acknowledging the benefit. Do not again be thrown on your bed by sinning, in the evil of a body paralyzed by its pleasures. As you now are, so walk, mindful of the command, ‘See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you’ (John 5:14), if you prove yourself bad after the blessing you have received. You have heard the loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come out’.” (St Gregory the Theologian, Oration on Holy Baptism, XL, 33)



DIVINE LITURGY INTENTIONS

Today +George Arraj, Sr(5th). Requested by Antoinette Arraj & Family
May 7 +Anthony Moossa (5th). Requested by Lauri Moossa

Today's Coffee Hr. is hosted by Antoinette Arraj & Lisa Jagielski

Next Sunday's Coffee Hr. will be hosted by Lauri Moossa

Please remember in your prayers: George Arraj, Jr., Ron Abraham, Peter Abraham, Robert Ghiz, Sadie Mirante, Archie Opatka, Anthony Poti, Katherine Thomas, Charlotte Stockhaus, Ruth Welsh, Richard Abraham, Sr., Frank Boyda, Carol Boyda, Bob Lynch, Michael Mooradian, Michael McNeil, Jeff McNeil, Wyatt William Rahall, Lauren Abraham, Nicholas Haddad, Elaine Foley, David Ahlin, Elio Kanaan, all those affected by the earthquakes in Syria and Turkey, and the people of Ukraine.

If there are people for whom you would like me to pray, please reach out and give me their names. Part of our vocation as Christians is to pray for each other, especially when someone is sick or suffering in any way.

Welcome to any visitors we have with us this morning! We are happy to have you worship with us.

Please join us downstairs in the church hall for the coffee hour so that we can get to know each other better and answer any questions you may have about the parish or the Melkite Church.

SAVE THE DATE

As you may know, 2023 is the 100th anniversary of the parish. We will mark the occasion on *November 4-5*. We will celebrate **Great Vespers followed by a banquet on November 4. On November 5, we will celebrate a hierarchal Divine Liturgy followed by lunch in the parish hall. Please mark your calendars and plan to attend. More information will be forthcoming. Please contact Fr. Bryan if you would like to help with the planning and preparation for the occasion. Our next meeting will be Wednesday *May 10 at 6:30pm*.**

Last Week's Collection

Weekly	\$1,592
Candles	\$ 27
Coffee Hr.	\$ 30
Diocesan	\$ 30
TOTAL	\$1,679

God bless you for your generosity!

LIGHTING UPGRADE

We have finished the upgrade of the interior lighting in the church. It is much brighter and will be more cost effective!

Thanks to Jean Sakhat and family for their generous donation of the materials and labor that made the upgrade possible.

God bless you for your generosity to the parish!

FINANCIALS

March 2023

Income \$ 8,512

Expenses \$ 11,632

Net (\$ 3,120)

YTD (10/2022-3/2023)

Income \$46,017

Expenses \$53,808

Net (\$7,791)

Paralyzed by Sins and Thoughtless Acts (John 5:1-15)

THE SCRIPTURES READ on the remaining Sundays in the Paschal season present us with some of life's most debilitating hardships: blindness, isolation, and, today, paralysis. In the passage from the Acts of the Apostles read today we hear about the healing of a man named Aeneas in Lydda (Lod), some 23 miles northwest of Jerusalem. Aeneas, we are told, "*had been bedridden eight years and was paralyzed*" (Acts 9:33).

In the Gospel reading which follows, we hear about another man "*who had an infirmity thirty-eight years*" (Jn 5:5) and who was healed by the Lord Jesus, at the Pool of Bethesda (or Bethzatha) outside Jerusalem, where the infirm gathered hoping for healing. This pool was used to clean the animals destined for sacrifice before they would be brought into the temple.

It is not clear why the sick gathered there. There was no explicit mention of miracles at this pool in Jewish sources of the day such as Josephus or Philo. The pool itself, buried in the destruction of Jerusalem, was unknown until archeologists uncovered it in the nineteenth century. This led some to suggest that the passage was not historical at all. Rather it was meant to teach that the "angel in the water" foreshadowed the transforming power of the Holy Spirit in baptism, which heals us of sin (see Tertullian, *On Baptism*, chapter 5).

Others have noted that there were healing springs and pools in the ancient pagan world as well. Cures at those pools followed specific patterns like the one John records here: the first one entering the pool after the water was "stirred" would be healed. John affirms that Christ's word alone, without any ritual or procedure, was enough to heal. Like the paralytic who had to stop relying on the pool for salvation and turn instead to Christ, so Israel had to stop relying upon the Law to save them, and turn to Christ instead.

What Does It Mean to be Paralyzed?

In the Early Church commentators did not often speculate on the pool or even the nature of the man's illness. It was more common to compare the physical infirmity of the paralyzed man to the spiritual paralysis which afflicts Christians, either occasionally or in a regular way. It was often noted how, in the lives of each one of us, there will be spiritual paralysis: moments of weakness or failure, which can last for many years, as with the paralytic at the sheep pool. In "spiritual paralysis," the energies of our soul, of our mind, of our heart, of our will, of our body itself are fettered, fettered by the fact that we have no courage and we have no power within us to move and to act to the full of our longings. We stand, year after year on the very edge, on the bank of the pool that could give us life without being able to enter it.

Christian Life as Synergy

In one of the last New Testament books to reach its final form, the Second Epistle of St Peter, we see the Christian spiritual life addressed. Spiritual life, we read, comes "*... through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by whom have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature*" (2 Pt 1:3-4). The way to theosis, being partakers of the divine nature, comes because of Christ. God become incarnate so that we might become divinized.

We, however, need to embrace this gift, lest it wither away and we become blind or paralyzed. We do this, the epistle continues, by practicing virtue, self-control, godliness, perseverance, brotherly kindness and love. "*For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins*" (2 Pt 1:3-9). Fruitful Christian life, then, requires that we do our part to make our own the gift of divine life we have received.

Trisagion

All of you who have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. Alleluia! (3X)

Prokimenon

Reader: Sing praise to our God, sing praise! Sing praise to our King, sing praise!

People: Sing praise to our God, sing praise! Sing praise to our King, sing praise!

Reader: All you peoples, clap your hands! Shout to God with cries of gladness!

People: Sing praise to our God, sing praise! Sing praise to our King, sing praise!

Reader: Sing praise to our God, sing praise!

People: Sing praise to our King, sing praise!

Epistle: Acts 9:32-42

Alleluia Verses

In You, O Lord, I have hoped: let me never be put to shame. In Your justice, save me and deliver me, lend me Your ear and hasten my deliverance.

Verse: Be for me a protecting God, a sheltering house to save me.

Gospel: Jn. 5:1-15, Sunday of Paralytic

Hirmos (Tone 1)

The angel cried out to the one who is full of grace: "Hail, immaculate Virgin!" Again, hail, for your Son is risen from the tomb on the third day. Shine, shine, O New Jerusalem, for the glory of the Lord has shown upon you. Rejoice and be glad, O Sion, and you, O pure one. O Mother of God, exult in the resurrection of your Son.

Kinonikon (Tone 1)

Receive the body, the body of Christ, and drink from the Fountain of immortality. Alleluia.

After Communion—Christ is risen... (Once)

Instead of "Blessed by the name of the Lord..." Christ is risen (three times)

At the end of the Divine Liturgy

Priest: Christ is Risen!

People: He is truly Risen! (three times)

Priest: Glory to His Resurrection on the third day!

People: We adore His holy Resurrection on the third day!