



Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas

The Reading is from Mark 2:1-12

At that time, Jesus entered Capernaum and it was reported that he was at home. And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room for them, not even about the door; and he was preaching the word to them. And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and when they had made an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic lay. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "My son, your sins are forgiven."

Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, "Why does this man speak thus? It is a blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, "Why do you question thus in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your pallet and walk? But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins'-he said to the paralytic-"I say to you, rise, take up your pallet and go home." And he rose, and immediately took up the pallet and went out before them all; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"

Resurrectional Apolytikion. Mode 1. Automelon.

The stone had been secured with a seal by the Judeans, * and a guard of soldiers was watching Your immaculate body. * You rose on the third day, O Lord * and Savior, granting life unto the world. * For this reason were the powers of heaven crying out to You, O Life-giver: * Glory to Your resurrection, O Christ; * glory to Your kingdom; * glory to Your dispensation, only One who loves mankind. [SD] Glory.

For the Hierarch. From Triodion Mode pl. 4.

Beacon of Orthodox belief, the strong support of the Church and her teacher inspired by God, you are the ornament of monks, the unassailable champion of theologians, O Gregory the Wonder-worker and the boast of Thessalonica, the messenger of grace. Forever earnestly entreat for the salvation of our souls.

Discussion

On this second Sunday of Great Lent, we remember a great saint who knew that our salvation is not in mere ideas about God, but in true participation in His life by grace.

St. Gregory Palamas lived in the 14th century in the Byzantine Empire. A monastic, a bishop, and a scholar, he defended the experience of hesychast monks who in the stillness of deep prayer beheld the divine light of the uncreated energies of God. In ways that go beyond rational understanding, they saw the divine glory as they participated in the life of God by grace.

Following the ancient Fathers, but in a more precise manner, he made a distinction between God's unique, unshared essence and the eternal, creative and providential energies by which the Lord enables created beings to participate in His being, His life and His light without, however, introducing any division into the unity of the divine Nature. God is not a philosophical concept for Saint Gregory: He is Love, He is Living Person and consuming fire, as Scripture teaches (Deuteronomy 4:24), Who does everything to make us godlike.

The feast day of Saint Gregory Palamas is November 14, the day of his repose, however the Orthodox Church commemorates the Saint on the Second Sunday of Lent.

Jesus Christ has joined humanity and divinity and dwells in our hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit. We truly become partakers of the divine nature when we know by experience the presence of God in our lives.

The Lord did not simply convey ideas to the paralytic, but instead shared His divine energies by restoring him to health, both spiritually and physically. At the root of all human corruption is our sin, which weakens and sickens us all, and the Savior showed His divinity by forgiving the man's sins. Christ then enabled the man to rise up and walk as evidence that He has the authority to forgive sins as the Son of God. This healing also shows what it means to be infused with the gracious divine energies, for the paralyzed man experienced freedom from bondage and a miraculous transformation of every dimension of his life. He did not simply hear words or receive a diagnosis, for the Lord healed him inwardly and outwardly.

Just think for a moment of how easily we fall into words, thoughts, and deeds that we know are not holy. Our habitual sins have become second nature to us; left to our own resources we are no more able to make them go away than a paralyzed man is to get up and walk.

Too often, we are willing only to ask for forgiveness, but not to rise, take up our beds, and walk. In other words, we fail to see that being infused with the gracious divine energies is not a matter of simply being excused from paying a penalty or declared not guilty; instead, it is truly a calling to become who we are created to be in God's image and likeness. It is to be healed from all the ravages of sin and to shine with the light of holiness as we participate by grace in the life of the Holy Trinity.