



**Orthodox Mission of the
Entrance of the Theotokos
into the Temple**

**306 W. Main Street
Emmitsburg, MD 21727**

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The Cure for our Disease
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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

And behold, they brought to him a paralytic, lying on his bed; and when Jesus saw their faith he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven." And behold, some of the scribes said to themselves, "This man is blaspheming." But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins" -- he then said to the paralytic -- "Rise, take up your bed and go home." And he rose and went home.

Over the past several years Matushka and I have shared with you much of the news concerning our beloved daughter Sophia and her affliction due to metastatic breast cancer. It is now going on four years since she has been receiving chemo and other forms of therapy that have held the disease at bay. Glory to God that she is able to get to the hospital in Pittsburgh for her treatments, typically on a weekly basis.

Ultimately, we pray for a cure. It is wonderful that modern medicine has checked the progress

of the disease, but the solution we all pray for is a cure, a cure that does away with the disease itself. So many people suffer from this or that disease, and our prayers are always that God would guide the hands of the researchers and doctors so that whatever the physical disease is can be entirely done away with.

There is a difference between curing a disease and merely alleviating its symptoms. If you understand this you will be able to understand the somewhat cryptic comment of our Lord to the scribes in Sunday's Gospel lesson: "For which is easier to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk?' This rhetorical question is of course meant to highlight the authority that Jesus, and Jesus alone, has to forgive sins. And yet when we read the lesson, we might be tempted to say, "Well, of course it is more difficult to heal a paralytic than to announce forgiveness!" But we would be wrong. Only God can forgive sins, and until He does, until we receive His forgiveness in repentance through the authority He has given to His Church, our sins remain unforgiven and continue to fester.

The Church, Brothers and Sisters, is about reconciliation. Reconciliation of the ancient and very present condition of our separation from God. To be sure, we are active as disciples of the Lord of Love in every way possible to alleviate the suffering of our fellow human beings. We feed the hungry; we visit the sick; we pray for health and healing. But these acts of mercy are the fruit we bear when we are joined in that union with God that we call faith; actions of love flow like "streams of living water" from the hearts of those who allow themselves to be drawn by the Holy Spirit to the One Who alone can, does and will cure us completely. The paralytic in our Gospel lesson suffered as many, as perhaps all of us suffer in one way or another, because of the separation from God in which we all share. Even the apparent "innocent" suffer through no direct fault of their own, because they, like all of us, have strayed and gone their own way apart from God. Our only hope is the cure of our ancient disease; our only hope is reconciliation with the One Who is Life and Salvation.

This is what the lesson from the ninth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew reminds us of. The cure we need for all that ails us awaits fulfillment in union with the Lord. Only His forgiveness of our sins, our ancient sin of alienation from Him, can lead to reconciliation. This is what the Church is about: union, faith in the Lord Jesus, Theosis. All will be healed in that day when the Lord returns, when He is All in All. Until then, we live by faith, and it is that faith that will lead us to become every more like Him, so that acts of love and compassion can flow, in the words of the ancient prophet Amos, like an "ever flowing stream." To that end, may each of us aspire with our hearts, our souls, our minds and our strength!

Fr. Elias

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