



Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple

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How A Paralytic Teaches us about Intercession For Others July 20, 2025

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory Forever!

- The healing of the paralytic has a number of notable elements that we need to pay attention to
 - First, it was the intercessions of his friends that the Lord praises. Their faith was what was notable, not the faith of the paralytic.
 - Never doubt the value of your prayer on behalf of others!
 - Second, healing follows forgiveness of sin.
- Of course, the religious leaders of that time protested, because they know rightly that only God can forgive sins. What they failed to accept was that Jesus is God – God incarnate, a concept that they had not yet wrapped their minds around.
- Everything that is wrong in this life is the result of our rebellion against and separation from God.
- The forgiveness of our sin, when met with our repentance, our realization that without God we can do nothing, that without Him there is no hope for us, -- this alone leads to reconciliation.
- It's almost like a mathematical formula: God's forgiveness + our repentance = reconciliation. This, of course, is what the Holy Sacrament of Penance (which we mistakenly call confession, because it is more than simple admitting of our fault) is all about: Reconciliation with the One Who made us.
- Without God's forgiveness we are lost.
- But don't we take it for granted? And how about the multitudes around us who seem unconcerned about it? They go about their lives outside of any attempt to be reconciled, not realizing that their very existence depends on His good will.
- They do not realize that they are not immortal by nature. The human soul is created by God; it is mortal and can die. The Christian affirmation is that our souls are immortal only by Grace, by God's own good will.
- So what happens to those who in this life refuse to repent? What happens to those who willfully turn away from God, either purposefully in hatred or apathetically go about their lives with total selfishness.

- Some Christians have said that such people wind up after judgment in hell. They allocate the lost souls to the place of condemnation, kind of like brushing the dirt under the carpet rather than actually dealing with it.
- But this is not a sufficient explanation, is it? We cannot live in joy or eternal bliss knowing that others are suffering in condemnation, can we? Isn't salvation about our unity with God, who is all-loving, and all-merciful? St. John says, "God is love."
- This is more than a metaphor. It is the central reality of our entire faith, of our entire existence!
- The early Fathers wrestled with these concepts: St. Augustine, St. Basil, St. Gregory the Theologian, St. Gregory of Nyssa.
- They knew that the God of love could not and would not condemn for all of eternity those who were lost in this life, those who never heard the truth, or even those who heard it and rejected it.
- They taught that those who were condemned to Hell as we speak of it, would be put there for their own good, until they too were transformed by the experience to come to faith. In other words, hell for them was a temporary reality, a training ground, a purgation and purification for their eventual reclamation.
- There is no joy in saying that the evil are lost. There is joy only if they too can be brought to the fulfillment of what St. Paul says in his epistle to the Philippians, that at the Name of Jesus, every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord!
- Forgiveness, Brothers and Sisters, is freely offered! We are members of the Church precisely because we know of our need for it; we look within, see our sins, our faults, acknowledge them, and just as importantly, resolve to turn away from them. We repent. But for those who don't do so in this life, there will indeed be a time of purgation so that they too can come to the knowledge of the truth.
- Will any be lost eternally? I cannot imagine it to be so. With love and faith, our prayer must be for all to be saved by the Grace and Loving-Kindness of our God, who is love!
- And if we can desire and pray on behalf of others, as the friends of the paralytic did in today's lesson, is it not even more likely that the Lord, Who is more compassionate and more caring and more loving than are we, will do even greater!

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