

## HEALING OF THE PARALYTIC - JULY 16, 2017

After listening to the Sunday Gospel today, we might respond, like Fr. Schmemmann once remarked about the miracle of the healing of another paralytic, the one at the Sheep pool, “that it's just another miracle, another unbelievable event that has nothing whatsoever in common with our life, interests, needs, questions ...” But if we listen carefully, this Gospel, as well as all the Gospel accounts of miracles, actually have quite a bit to do with us and our needs and our lives. First we see that this paralytic must have had some kind of faith, because he allowed himself to be carried and brought to the Lord. So the first question is about faith, and we need to look at our own faith, how strong, or weak it is. The second thing is that this man had to be brought, he was paralyzed, so four men carried him, and these men must have also had some kind of faith, otherwise they would not have wasted their time and carried this paralytic friend of theirs to the Lord. At this point we can reflect on our own lives and the times we were carried by others to the Lord. Fr. Tom Hopko points out that he was carried as a baby to the church for Holy Baptism, so his parents and godparents who carried him, they believed and must have had some kind of faith. And then he was carried to Holy Communion, again, carried by others who had faith and carried, just like this paralytic, to the Lord. When I think of being unable to walk as a baby and being carried by others to the Lord. Several instances in my life come to mind when I think of being carried by others. As a very young child I suffered an injury while playing outside. I was a bloody mess, and four of the older kids carried me, like this paralytic, to my mother, who almost had a heart attack when she saw me. Then when I was older, again I suffered an injury, and blood was pouring out of my ear, and I was again carried by four of the other kids to my mother. And when I was much older, I was hit by a car while playing softball in the gutter. That's what kids did in Brooklyn when I grew up. We played ball in the gutter. Witnesses said that the impact projected me into the air, and I spun around seven times before I fell to the ground. And I vividly remember the world spinning after being hit by the car. And while I was spinning, I felt the presence of someone else being there with me and holding me, and I thought that it was my Guardian Angel. That may very well have been just my imagination. But it is a fact that after being hit by the car I stood up on my own and walked away virtually uninjured. A little bruised and banged up, but otherwise uninjured. I believe in Guardian angels and that they carry us and protect us, I believe that the Mother of God carries us, I believe that the Saints carry us, and they all bring us to the Lord. There is a paralysis of the body, and there is a paralysis of the soul. One of the most powerful experiences of God and faith is when you experience healing of body and forgiveness of sins, and you are carried to the Lord by the prayers and intercessions of pious people, the saints, and the Mother of God. Jesus came to heal us and forgive us, and that is what all these miracle accounts in the Gospel are all about. Jesus approaches us with meekness, love, forbearance, and offers us these gifts. He wants to forgive us our sins, and He wants to heal us. And even if we tell Him to “Get out,” like the Gadarenes did, Jesus shows humility and He leaves, not forcing Himself upon anyone. It doesn't say in the Gospel today that the scribes verbally accused Jesus of blasphemy for forgiving sins. It says that Jesus could see into their hearts, which is another demonstration of the power that Jesus has as the Messiah and the Son of God. Jesus reveals the thoughts of the Scribes and says, “That you may know that the Son of Man.....” Jesus calls Himself the Son of Man, which is a title of the Messiah. So what Jesus is saying is, “That you may know that I am the Messiah and that I am the Son of God and I have the authority and the power to forgive sins, he tells the paralytic to rise, take up his pallet, and walk.” Jesus says, “I did not come to judge the world. I came to save it.” The whole of Christianity, as demonstrated by our Lord today, consists of God's love. Fr. Schmemmann says it is that love which, in the words of St Paul, God has “poured into our hearts” (Rom 5:5). That is Christianity's new, eternal commandment, and the content of the entire gospel and all our faith ...