



The Tower

Sunday 3rd May 2026

Sunday of the Paralytic
Saint Barbara the Great Martyr Orthodox Church
Issue 018



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Christ is Risen!

This Sunday is the Sunday of the Paralytic. It is the fourth Sunday after Pascha and we commemorate Christ's healing of the man in the pool of Bethesda. We're slowly adjusting back to the usual rhythm of our liturgical year as the usual Wednesday Vespers was served and commemorated the apostle James the brother of the Lord. Last week we restarted our Wednesday catechesis group and again a group of young people interested in Orthodox started to gather. As we approach a much brighter time of the year I'm sure that the group of the people who attend the Wednesday catechesis will increase. Also on the 25th of May a pilgrimage has been organised to the well of St. Melangell at Penant Melangell. This is a very nice place and I invite everyone to come and take part as it's on bank holiday Monday. Last year a small group from our church was present and we had very nice time.

The people from Shrewsbury, who organise this pilgrimage are usually very well presented there. The place is located in the very beautiful Welsh countryside, about 50 miles deep in Mid Wales. The Shrine Church of Saint Melangell is one of the loveliest small churches in Britain and one of the most remote. The Church is a Grade 1 listed building and there has been a Christian Church here for over 1200 years. Set in a place of great beauty deep in the Berwyn Mountains, the church stands in a round churchyard, once a Bronze Age site, ringed by ancient yew trees estimated to be two thousand years old. Parts of the building date from the 12th Century though the most recent, a rebuilding of the apse on its original foundations, was completed only in 1990. The impression is still that of a

simple Norman church, well loved and beautified over the years.

Last year about 30 people participated in this pilgrimage. The weather was very poor with heavy rain most of the time. After a long search for the actual well of St. Melangell, which even the locals hardly remembered where it was, we found it and we served the Blessing of the waters at the well. Late in the afternoon we served Great Vespers in the church. It was a really nice day in the very beautiful land of Wales. If you can, please come on the 25th of May, on bank holiday Monday 2026.

Fr. John



Announcements

- On the 25th of May, on Bank Holiday Monday, you are invited to take part in a Pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Melangell. We will arrive at midday to visit the actual well for the blessing of the waters. Then, in the afternoon we will serve Vespers in the church of St. Melangell. Don't forget to bring warm clothes, a light lunch and dry shoes. The weather in Wales is unpredictable!



Here's a photograph from our previous pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Melangell.

Upcoming Services

6 May Wed	6.30pm 7.15pm	Vespers Catechesis	Appearance of the sign of the Cross
9 May Sat	5.30pm	Great Vespers	Apostle Simeon
10 May Sun	10.00am 11.00am	Matins Divine Liturgy	Sunday of the Samaritan Woman
13 May Wed	6.30pm 7.15pm	Vespers Catechesis	Martyr Isidore
16 May Sat	5.30pm	Great Vespers	Andronicus and Junia of the 70 Apostles
17 May Sun	10.00am 11.00am	Matins Divine Liturgy	Sunday of the Blind Man

Pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Melangell

25th May 2026



On the 25th of May, on Bank Holiday Monday, you are invited to take part in a Pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Melangell. We will arrive at midday to visit the actual well for the blessing of the waters. Then, in the afternoon we will serve Vespers in the church of St. Melangell. Don't forget to bring warm clothes, a light lunch and dry shoes. The weather in Wales is unpredictable!

A story from the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

The fourth Sunday of Holy Pascha is observed by the Orthodox Church as the Sunday of the Paralytic. The day commemorates the miracle of Christ healing a man who had been paralyzed for thirty-eight years. The biblical story of the event is found in the Gospel of John 5:1-15.

Background

Close to the Sheep's Gate in Jerusalem, there was a pool, which was called the Sheep's Pool. It had five porches, that is, five sets of pillars supporting a domed roof. Under this roof there lay very many sick people with various maladies awaiting the moving of the water. The first person to step in after the troubling of the water was healed immediately of whatever malady he had.

It was there that the paralytic of today's Gospel was lying, tormented by his infirmity of thirty-eight years. When Christ beheld him, He asked him, "Will you be made whole?" And he answered with a quiet and meek voice, "Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool." The Lord said unto him, "Rise, take up your bed, and walk." And straightaway the man was made whole and took up his bed. Walking in the presence of all, he departed rejoicing to his own house. According to the expounders of the Gospels, the Lord Jesus healed this paralytic during the days of the Passover, when He had gone to Jerusalem for the Feast, and dwelt there teaching and working miracles. According to Saint John the Evangelist, this miracle took place on the Sabbath.

Icon of the Sunday of the Paralytic

The icon of the Sunday of the Paralytic depicts the biblical story of the Christ healing the paralytic. Our Lord, accompanied by His disciples, is shown blessing the paralytic. The

man has risen and taken up his bed as commanded by Christ. The paralytic is bowing toward the Lord in reverence and in gratitude for the great miracle that has been done. In the background of the icon is the pool where the infirmed came for healing.



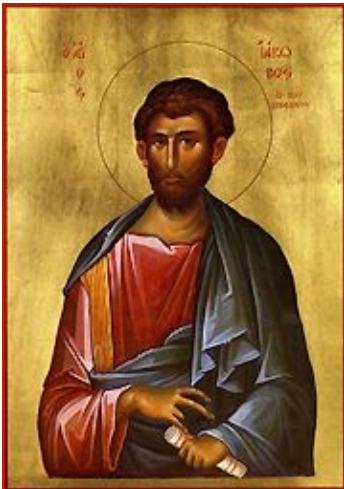
Orthodox Christian Celebration of the Feast of the Sunday of the Paralytic

The Sunday of the Paralytic is celebrated with the Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom. On this Sunday and throughout the Paschal period until the Apodosis or leave-taking of Pascha, the day before the Feast of the Ascension, the services begin with the chanting of the troparion of Pascha, "Christ is risen..." Scripture readings for the feast are the following: At the Divine Liturgy: Acts 9:32-42 and John 5:1-15.

Hymn of the Feast

Kontakion (Third Tone):

I am grievously paralyzed in a multitude of sins and wrongful deeds. As You raised up the paralytic of old, also raise up my soul by Your divine guidance, that I may cry out, "Glory to Your Power O Compassionate Christ."



Synaxarion

James the Apostle and brother of St. John the Theologian

James was one of the Twelve, like his brother John (celebrated on Sept. 26), whom the Lord called "Sons of Thunder," because they became great preachers and because of their profound theology. It was the Saint's boldness in preaching the Gospel that Herod Agrippa, the son of Aristobulus and grandson of Herod the Great, could not endure, and so he took him into custody during the days of the Passover, and slew him with the sword (Acts 12: 1-2); and thus he drank the cup of which the Saviour had spoken to him prophetically (Matt. 20:23). As for Herod, the following year he went down to Caesarea, and, as the Acts of the Apostles records: "Upon a set day, Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration" to the elders of Tyre and Sidon; and the flatterers that surrounded him "gave a shout, saying, 'it is the voice of a god,

and not of a man.' And immediately an Angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory; and like his grandfather (see Dec. 29) "he was eaten of worms and gave up the spirit" (Acts 12:21-23)

Apolytikion of Apostle James

Third Tone

O Holy Apostle James, intercede to our merciful God, that He may grant our souls forgiveness of sins.

Kontakion of Apostle James

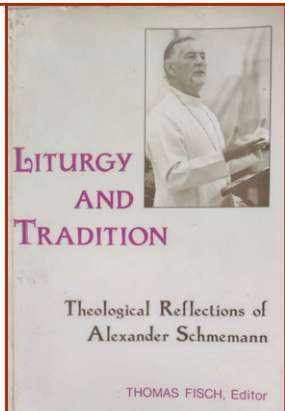
Second Tone

The voice of thy God thou heardest when it called to thee, O glorious James; hence, casting off thy father's love, thou together with John thy brother didst run straightway to Christ the Lord, and with him was granted to see the Lord's most divine Transfiguration.

Book recommendation from the Parish Library

This week's book recommendation is 'Liturgy and Tradition - Theological Reflections of Alexander Schemann by Thomas Fisch.

Reflections on the theological aspect of the liturgy was the focus of Alexander Schmemmann's intellectual life. He intuitively grasped and insisted upon the essentially theological character of all liturgical renewal. He recognized that the renewal of the church requires a rediscovery of the liturgy's own inherent theology, that same theology which once informed the whole of the church's life as well as the teachings and writings of the leaders of the Patristic age. This theological content which is inherent in the liturgy itself is designed by Schmemmann as liturgical theology.



The following readings and sermon have been extracted from the Archdiocese of Thyateira & Great Britain news bulletin.

To access the full bulleting, please visit: www.thyateira.org.uk.

ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΙΚΟΝ ΑΝΑΓΝΩΣΜΑ

Πράξ. θ´, 32-42

Ἐν ταῖς ἡμεραῖς ἐκείναις, ἐγένετο Πέτρον διερχόμενον διὰ πάντων κατελθεῖν καὶ πρὸς τοὺς ἁγίους τοὺς κατοικοῦντας Λύδδαν. Εὐρεν δὲ ἐκεῖ ἄνθρωπὸν τινα Αἰνέαν ὀνόματι, ἐξ ἐτῶν ὀκτὼ κατακέιμενον ἐπὶ κρᾶββάτῳ, ὃς ἦν παραλελυμένος. Καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ ὁ Πέτρος, Αἰνέα, ἰδοὺ σε Ἰησοῦς ὁ Χριστός· ἀνάστηθι καὶ στρώσον σεαυτῷ. Καὶ εὐθέως ἀνέστη. Καὶ εἶδον αὐτὸν πάντες οἱ κατοικοῦντες Λύδδαν καὶ τὸν Ἀσάρωνα, οἵτινες ἐπέστρεψαν ἐπὶ τὸν Κύριον. Ἐν Ἰόππῃ δὲ τις ἦν μαθήτρια ὀνόματι Ταβηθά, ἣ διερμηνευομένη λέγεται Δορκάς· αὕτη ἦν πλήρης ἀγαθῶν ἔργων καὶ ἐλεημοσυνῶν ὧν ἐποίει. Ἐγένετο δὲ ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ἐκείναις ἀσθενήσασαν αὐτὴν ἀποθανεῖν· λούσαντες δὲ αὐτὴν ἔθηκαν ἐν ὑπερῶ. Ἐγγὺς δὲ οὖσης Λύδδης τῇ Ἰόππῃ, οἱ μαθηταὶ ἀκούσαντες ὅτι Πέτρος ἐστὶν ἐν αὐτῇ, ἀπέστειλαν πρὸς αὐτὸν, παρακαλοῦντες μὴ ὀκνησαὶ διελθεῖν ἕως αὐτῶν. Ἀναστὰς δὲ Πέτρος συνήλθεν αὐτοῖς· ὃν παραγενόμενον ἀνήγαγον εἰς τὸ ὑπερῶν, καὶ παρέστησαν αὐτῷ πᾶσαι αἱ χῆραι κλαίουσαι καὶ ἐπιδεικνύμεναι χιτῶνας καὶ ἱμάτια ὅσα ἐποίει μετ' αὐτῶν οὖσα ἡ Δορκάς. Ἐκβαλὼν δὲ ἕξω πάντας ὁ Πέτρος θείει τὰ γόνατα προσῆξατο· καὶ ἐπιστρέψας πρὸς τὸ σῶμα, εἶπεν, Ταβηθά, ἀνάστηθι. Ἡ δὲ ἤνοιξεν τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς αὐτῆς· καὶ ἰδοῦσα τὸν Πέτρον, ἀνεκάθισεν. Δοὺς δὲ αὐτῇ χεῖρα, ἀνέστησεν αὐτὴν· φωνήσας δὲ τοὺς ἁγίους καὶ τὰς χήρας, παρέστησεν αὐτὴν ζῶσαν. Γνωστὸν δὲ ἐγένετο καθ' ὅλης τῆς Ἰόππης, καὶ πολλοὶ ἐπίστευσαν ἐπὶ τὸν Κύριον.

EPISTLE READING

Acts 9: 32-42

In those days, as Peter went here and there among them all, he came down also to the saints that lived at Lydda. There he found a man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden for eight years and was paralyzed. And Peter said to him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; rise and make your bed. And immediately he rose. And all the residents of Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord. Now there was at Joppa a disciple named Tabitha, which means Dorcas. She was full of good works and acts of charity. In those days she fell sick and died; and when they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room. Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men to him entreating him, Please come to us without delay. So Peter rose and went with them. And when he had come, they took him to the upper room. All the widows stood beside him weeping, and showing tunics and other garments which Dorcas made while she was with them. But Peter put them all outside and knelt down and prayed; then turning to the body he said, Tabitha, rise. And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. And he gave her his hand and lifted her up. Then calling the saints and widows he presented her alive. And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord.



Christian Orthodox Thyateira Youth (COTY)
COTY is the official youth ministry of the Archdiocese of Thyateira and Great Britain, for ages 16-35.
To learn more visit: www.coty.org.uk.
Instagram: COTY_org



ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΚΟΝ ΑΝΑΓΝΩΣΜΑ

Ἰωάν. ε΄, 1-15

Τῷ καιρῷ ἐκείνῳ, ἀνέβη ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα. Ἔστι δὲ ἐν τοῖς Ἱεροσολύμοις ἐπὶ τῇ προβατικῇ κολυμβήθρα, ἡ ἐπιλεγομένη Ἑβραϊστὶ Βηθεσδά, πέντε στοάς ἔχουσα. ἐν ταύταις κατέκειτο πλῆθος πολὺ τῶν ἀσθενούντων, τυφλῶν, χωλῶν, ξηρῶν, ἐκδεχομένων τὴν τοῦ ὕδατος κίνησιν. ἄγγελος γὰρ κατὰ καιρὸν κατέβαινεν ἐν τῇ κολυμβήθρα, καὶ ἐταράσσετο τὸ ὕδωρ· ὁ οὖν πρῶτος ἐμβὰς μετὰ τὴν ταραχὴν τοῦ ὕδατος ὑγιής ἐγίνετο ὧς δήποτε κατειχέτο νοσήματι. ἦν δὲ τις ἄνθρωπος ἐκεῖ τριάκοντα καὶ ὀκτῶ ἔτη ἔχων ἐν τῇ ἀσθενείᾳ αὐτοῦ. τοῦτον ἰδὼν ὁ Ἰησοῦς κατακείμενον, καὶ γνοὺς ὅτι πολὺν ἤδη χρόνον ἔχει, λέγει αὐτῷ· θέλεις ὑγιῆς γενέσθαι; ἀπεκρίθη αὐτῷ ὁ ἀσθενῶν· Κύριε, ἄνθρωπον οὐκ ἔχω, ἵνα ὅταν ταραχθῇ τὸ ὕδωρ, βάλῃ με εἰς τὴν κολυμβήθραν· ἐν ᾧ δὲ ἔρχομαι ἐγώ, ἄλλος πρὸ ἐμοῦ καταβαίνει. λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς· ἐγειρε, ἄρον τὸν κράββαττόν σου καὶ περιπάτει. καὶ εὐθέως ἐγένετο ὑγιῆς ὁ ἄνθρωπος, καὶ ἦρε τὸν κράββατον αὐτοῦ καὶ περιπάτει. ἦν δὲ σάββατον ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ. ἔλεγον οὖν οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι τῷ θεραπευμένῳ· σάββατον ἐστίν· οὐκ ἔξεστὶ σοὶ ἄραι τὸν κράββατον. ἀπεκρίθη αὐτοῖς· ὁ ποιήσας με ὑγιῆ, ἐκεῖνός μοι εἶπεν· ἄρον τὸν κράββατόν σου καὶ περιπάτει. ἠρώτησαν οὖν αὐτόν· τίς ἐστίν ὁ ἄνθρωπος ὁ εἰπὼν σοι, ἄρον τὸν κράββατόν σου καὶ περιπάτει; ὁ δὲ ἰαθεὶς οὐκ ᾔδει τίς ἐστίν· ὁ γὰρ Ἰησοῦς ἐξένευσεν ὄχλου ὄντος ἐν τῷ τόπῳ. μετὰ ταῦτα εὕρισκε αὐτόν ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ· ἴδε ὑγιῆς γέγονας· μηκέτι ἀμάρτανε, ἵνα μὴ χεῖρόν σοι τι γένηται. ἀπήλθεν ὁ ἄνθρωπος καὶ ἀνήγγειλε τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἐστίν ὁ ποιήσας αὐτόν ὑγιῆ.



GOSPEL READING

John 5: 1-15

At that time, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, in Hebrew called Bethesda which has five porticoes. In these lay a multitude of invalids, blind, lame, paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water; for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool, and troubled the water; whoever stepped in first after the troubling of the water was healed of whatever disease he had. One man was there, who had been ill for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him and knew that he had been lying there a long time, he said to him, Do you want to be healed? The sick man answered him, Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is troubled, and while I am going another steps down before me. Jesus said to him, Rise, take up your pallet, and walk. And at once the man was healed, and he took up his pallet and walked. Now that day was the sabbath. So the Jews said to the man who was cured, It is the sabbath, it is not lawful for you to carry your pallet. But he answered them, The man who healed me said to me, 'Take up your pallet, and walk.' They asked him, Who is the man who said to you, 'Take up your pallet, and walk'? Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, as there was a crowd in the place. Afterward, Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse befall you. The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him.



SERMON ON THE GOSPEL READING

Many will know of Saint Sophrony the Athonite, this great saint of our times. In one of his books, he writes that he cannot understand Christianity without asceticism. That is to say without spiritual exercise and struggle. That should make perfect sense, since being a Christian means to carry one's cross. 'The kingdom of God suffereth violence. And the violent take it by force' (Matthew 11:12).

This mentality is obviously not unique to Christianity. Other religions practise harsher asceticism. In sport also, no one gains a trophy without exerting themselves to their limits, and often beyond. St Paul points out that they do this to obtain a corruptible crown. Whereas in the Church, God offers us eternal ones. One successful athlete is quoted as saying, 'If you want to be an athlete, you must love pain'; not just to bear pain or put up with it but to love pain! This too comes as no surprise to the mature Christian. For centuries now, our ascetical fathers have been exhorting us to become φιλό-πονοι. That is to say, literally, lovers of pain, not in a morbid sense of course.

In the Church there are two types of asceticism: negative and positive. The one tells us what we should avoid, whilst the other tells us what we should do. In the early stages of our spiritual lives, we pay more attention to the negative form, until our sins and passions are somewhat subdued. But positive asceticism is far more important. Attack is the best form of defence. The more we practise positive asceticism, the less we will need the former.

Let us never lose sight of the fact that the commandments are first and foremost positive in character. The two main commandments are of love: for God and neighbour. The rest just explain what that looks like in practice. Many of you will be familiar with the quote of blessed Augustine, 'Love and do what you like'. Saint Paul speaks along similar lines exhorting us to 'owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law' (Romans 13:8).

By the grace of God, we have lived through Great Lent and are now traversing the period of Pentecost. Both periods last for approximately the same amount of time and both are equally important. Lent may be considered a period where we exercise ourselves more in negative asceticism. The period of Pentecost should be equally intense but in a more positive manner. With the Cross of Christ, we are indeed able to efface our sins. But that is only half the battle. We also need to put on Christ and to be imbued with His Spirit. That is precisely what this period is all about.

Saint Porphyrios would encourage his spiritual children to fill their hearts with Christ. The presence of light banishes darkness, and the presence of Christ expels sin and evil. With Lent we have cleansed the house of our soul. Now we need to invite the grace of the Holy Spirit to take up its abode there. If we fail to do so, as the Gospel warns us, we run the risk of ceding that sacred space to other spirits. Nature abhors a vacuum. So does our soul. If we fail to attract the grace of the Holy Spirit into our hearts, we leave our souls vulnerable to evil spirits.

We all need to experience a taste of Pentecost, otherwise the resurrection of Christ will remain a distant, historical fact for us, detached from our daily lives. Therefore, with humble yet ardent desire, let us open our hearts to God and ask Him to send down upon us the grace of the Holy Spirit. Thus we will live our own personal Pentecost. That is what the Church is here for and that is why we are her members.

Hieromonk Bartholomew

For your prayers

2 May	Timofei Chaplin	Baptised this day in 2010
4 May	Pitor Tokajuk Delia Alexandra Craciun Sergei Dubrovskij Photini Jones	Baptised this day in 2008 Baptised this day in 2008 Laid to rest this time in 2012 Laid to rest this time in 2001
5 May	Albert Andrei Mates	Baptised this day in 2019
6 May	Christopher Johnson	Laid to rest this time in 1987
8 May	Isaac Michael Aristodemou	Baptised this day in 2016
9 May	Magdalena Knox	Baptised this day in 2010



Please consider donating!

Our parish is a self-supporting charitable community, relying solely on the generosity of our faithful, with no supplementary funding from external bodies. We rely on your donations for everything you see in the church including small salary for the priest, and don't forget all charitable work of the church and all the fundraisings organised from the Archdiocese. All our finances are in your hands. You are the owners of everything in the church including the building and all the bills.

Please consider supporting your Parish by donating monthly via standing order:
<https://www.stbarbara.org.uk/church-membership>

If you are a UK taxpayer, please complete the Gift Aid Form alongside each donation as this allows the church to receive an additional 25p for every £1 you donate, at no extra cost to you. Please use yellow envelopes located at the entrance of the church. If you use card payment for your donations, and you like to Gift aid your payment, please put your receipt in the yellow envelope and sign it.

Thank you for your support !



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