

Our Need for Spiritual Healing



The following homily was delivered by His Grace, Bishop Klemes of Gardikion at the *Hesycharion* of Sts. Cyprian and Justina, in Pyrgos, Greece, on the Second Sunday of Great Lent (dedicated to the memory of St. Gregory Palamas), March 10/23, 2008.

Bishop Klemes spoke on the Gospel passage of the day, concerning the healing of the paralytic of Capernaum. The following is a broad outline of his homily.

Our Lord and His Saints, both living and reposed, behold clearly not so much our external appearance as, first and foremost, our inner state, the exact contents of our souls. And within our souls they see either light or darkness, health or illness. Very few Orthodox Christians are truly inwardly bright and healthy, thereby gladdening God and the Heavenly world.

Whatever we hold cherished and coveted within us is that which we worship, and this shapes the state of our inner world.

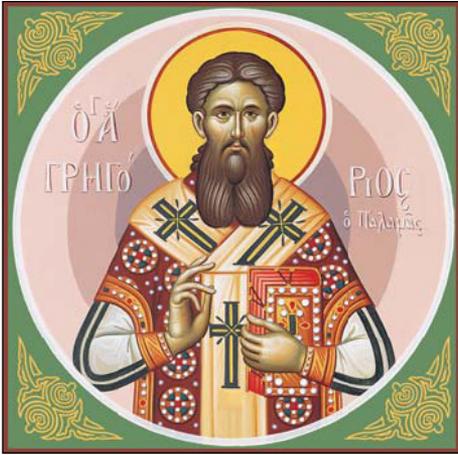
If within us we have God, the Grace of the Holy Spirit, Divine Energy and Power (which is Uncreated, not created), then we are truly worshipers of God; we have Heaven, Paradise, joy, peace, meekness, and repose within us. Then we are truly genuine, honest, sincere people, who benefit others. For, being the “light” and “salt” of the earth, as the Lord would have us, we serve as good examples to others, convey and reveal—even against our will—the good “contents” of our inner selves, and radiate peace, righteousness, and Grace.

If, on the other hand, we hold as a precious “treasure” within us some person or thing—that is, if we are passionately attached to them—then we are lamentable captives. We do not, in this case, worship the Living and True God, even if we sometimes hypocritically try to give such an impression to others. Rather, we worship the idols of our passions and degenerate into idolaters. When within us there are egotism, sensuality, or avarice, then our souls are infirm and we suffer from spiritual paralysis, even if we externally give the impression of being good-tempered, strong, and healthy. Within us

we experience the pain of our infirmity; our pain is great and we are in need of immediate healing.

Since our Lord desires our salvation and is concerned about the health of our souls, He demands of all of us—and not, of course, out of some sort of “selfishness” or “egotism”—that our first and great love be for Him, above all of our other loves—even the most sacred, such as for our families, spouses, parents, etc. For otherwise He does not deem us worthy of Him.

The paralytic in the Gospel passage of the day precisely offers us an example of spiritual healing, as St. Gregory Palamas, whose memory we celebrate today, interprets the passage for us.



Now then, St. Gregory tells us that the paralytic himself had great faith, and that the miracle of his healing was also performed with the coöperation of four of his fellow men, who led him before Christ after first taking apart the roof of the house where He was teaching. Our Lord first granted

him remission of his sins—that is, spiritual health—and then bodily healing.

We also frequently ask of our Lord those things that we consider to be in our own interest, pleasant, or necessary, but these requests usually concern things that are “bodily” and ephemeral, not spiritual and eternal. And when these requests are not fulfilled, we grumble and criticize the Lord for not listening to us or concerning Himself with us; whereas the Lord is ever-present and knows much better than we do what is in the interest of our souls and how our spiritual health will come about. These are the things He waits for us to ask of Him; these are the things for which we should beg and which we should desire. And He will grant them to us.

According to St. Gregory Palamas, we, like the paralytic, are absolutely in need of four “helpers” and “supporters” of our faith, so that our approach to Christ might be therapeutic and salvific for our souls.

*The first thing we need is **to condemn ourselves**; that is, self-criticism and self-reproach. We must be conscious of our sinfulness, our wretched*

failings, and grieve and lament over them. For that matter, this is why we constantly repeat, now, during Great Lent, the Prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian: “Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see mine own failings and not to condemn my brother!” If we do not see the horror of our inner impurity and do not stop justifying ourselves while mercilessly condemning our brother, how will we make progress in repentance? If we do not cease overlooking the beam in our own eye, while minutely examining the mote in our brother’s eye, ostensibly to correct him, how will we cross the threshold of Divine Mercy and Divine Forgiveness?

*The second thing we need is frank **confession** before a spiritual Father, with contrition of heart and full acknowledgement of our sins, without making excuses. If we do not acknowledge that only we are to blame and that we are at fault—and no one else—then we are not truly confessing.*

*A true confession also means that we reveal **all** of our sins and not only a portion thereof; for, in most cases, those who are confessing do not tell everything and do not completely open their hearts, out of a fear and shame generated in them by the Devil. They imagine that the Confessor, who reckons them good and respectable people, will supposedly form a very bad and disapproving opinion of them. They imagine that their dignity will be wounded and that they will lose his respect, since the Confessor will surely feel repugnance and abominate them! **But here they are making a big mistake!** When the Confessor, as a fellow-sufferer who prays in his love for man during the Mystery, hears even the most abominable of sins, discerning our sincere repentance, he will not be disgusted by us, but precisely the opposite: he will truly empathize with us, love us, and will prayerfully and redemptively support us! Would that those confessing know this, believe this, and put it into practice; then they would see miracles...*

*The third thing we need is to promise, after our frank confession, **that we will no longer commit the same sins** until the time of our death. It is not possible to confess or to leave the confession room unburdened, while already fantasizing in detail about the way in which we will fall again! Of course, our Lord said “continue in repentance” [μετανοεῖτε] and not “repent” just once [μετανοήσατε]. It is possible that we may fall into the same sins, since we are weak human beings, at which we will need to rise anew. It is one thing, however, to fall because we were carried away, or out of momentary inattention or weakness, and another thing to fall inten-*

tionally and deliberately. The latter case reveals a lack of fear of God and constitutes mockery.

*The fourth thing of which we are in need is fervent **supplication**; that is, constant prayer, that we might keep ourselves from falling and might make spiritual progress. Our thoughts should be cleansed, that we might fall with humility before the One Who is able to preserve us in Grace. Without prayer, we will easily fall prey to the same passions. Unfortunately, most of us do not know how to pray either in the House of God or before our Icon corner at home, and this is because we do not have fear of God, remembrance of God, or a feeling of His omnipresence. And yet He always sees us, observes us, hears us, and judges us....*

The shortest and most powerful prayer is the Jesus Prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me!" This prayer, when accompanied by good deeds, repentance, and awareness of our sinfulness and of the presence, power, and love of God, accomplishes the miracle of our spiritual healing. It requires patience and persistence. How might it be possible to retreat daily, if only for a short while, from the disturbance of the vanity of this world and to enclose ourselves in the "chamber" of our heart, so as to meditate on the word of God and to repeat His All-Holy and Saving Name?

The Jesus Prayer can be said everywhere and at all times, so as to unify the faculties of our souls and to bless and sanctify our entire lives.

Within the holy period of the Great Fast, there are very beautiful and compunction-evoking services, which afford opportunities for our common communion with God and in which we can participate for the sake of spiritual benefit and healing: Great Compline, the Salutations to the Theotokos, Presanctified Divine Liturgies, and regular participation in the Holy Mysteries. Without frequent and constant Communion of the Immaculate Mysteries of the Body and Blood of Christ our God, spiritual life and true union with God are inconceivable. By means of the Eucharist, our Lord abides in us and we in Him. Only in this way do we perfectly unite both with Him and amongst ourselves, being a family of God and members of the Body of Christ.

We should know that we fulfill the Will of God and preserve the sacred legacy bequeathed to us by our Most Reverend Metropolitan when we tread the path of anti-innovationist Orthodoxy and genuine Orthopraxy; for without these two wings, we are unable to soar unhindered to the Divine heights of Heaven.

*Finally, we convey the warmest best wishes of our Most Reverend Metropolitan, and of the Bishops, clergy, and laypeople, to our beloved brother, Archimandrite Gregorios, on the occasion of his Nameday. Father Gregorios has been working resourcefully and with self-sacrifice for over two decades in this place, turning it, by the Grace of God, into a truly enviable **spiritual oasis**, in spite of the obstacles set forth by the Enemy and by those who fight against the witness and mission of Orthodox resistance.*

If we please God by our genuine repentance and allow Him to heal us, in accordance with what we have just said, then He will surely use us as instruments for the accomplishment of His work in His Holy House. We firmly believe that Christ Himself, not man, created our monastery and its dependencies. Thus, the work of God cannot be hindered or vanquished. “If God is with us, no one is against us!” “God is with us; know, ye nations, and be vanquished, for God is with us...”!

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During the gathering that followed in the parish reception hall, all of those present were treated to generous hospitality, both bodily and spiritually. Bishop Klemes once again had an opportunity to relate spiritually edifying examples from the life of St. Gregory

Palamas—in particular from his childhood, and the good influence the marvelous example of his parents, and especially his devout father, had on the Saint. He also related miracles by the Saint, stressing the meaning of his contribution, throughout the ages, to our correct orientation and our adherence to the Truth of our Confession of the Faith, which decisively determines our true inclusion in the Church of Christ. The Saint’s struggles against the anti-Hesychasts—which ultimately led to his imprisonment and anathematization by the Latin-minded Patriarch of Constantinople, John Kalekas—and his confessional stand before the Muslims during his captivity under the Turks have much to teach us about today’s era of apostatizing inter-Christian and interfaith ecumenism.

