

Pastoral visit of his Beatitude to Reineh



On Sunday, the 28th of April / 11th of May 2025, the Sunday of the Paralytic, according to the book of the Pentecostarion, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III conducted a pastoral visit to the town of Reineh, near the city of Nazareth.

There, His Beatitude was warmly received by the Orthodox Christian Scout Corps. Following this, He celebrated the Divine Liturgy in the beautiful Church of Saint George in Reineh. Concelebrating with His Beatitude were His Eminence Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth, His Eminence the Elder Chief Secretary Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Archimandrite Nektarios, Archimandrite Christodoulos, the parish priest of this community of Saint George in Reineh Fr Simeon, Archdeacon Mark, and Hierodeacon Eulogios. The church chanters of this parish sang in Arabic, and the faithful parishioners attended with reverence.

Before the Holy Communion, His Beatitude preached the divine word to the pious congregation as follows:

“The Lover of mankind and all-merciful Lord came to the Sheep Pool to heal the infirmities; and there He found a man lying there for many years, and cried unto him: Take up thy bed and walk in the straight paths,” the hymnographer of the Church exclaims, interpreting the Gospel reading.

Beloved brethren in Christ,

Pious Christians,

The grace of the Holy Spirit has gathered us all in this holy Church of the Great Martyr Saint George, in your blessed town of Reineh, so that we may celebrate the three-day Resurrection of Christ from the dead, and commemorate the wondrous and supernatural miracle wrought upon the paralysed man at the Sheep Pool in Jerusalem, the ruins of which remain preserved to this day.

“And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, He saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole? The impotent man answered Him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me. Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk” (John 5:5-8, KJV), according to the infallible testimony of the Evangelist John.

This extraordinary miracle of the healing of the Paralytic stands apart from the many and innumerable miracles performed by Jesus Christ. As the great Origen aptly observes: “Indeed, He considered the great multitude of the sick, of the blind, the lame, the withered, awaiting the moving of the water (John 5:3); yet He did not heal them all, but chose one—he who was afflicted with the gravest illness and who, due to the length of his suffering, had lost all hope of healing.”

In other words, Christ chose from among the infirm the one most grievously afflicted and most bereft of hope, yet precisely because of his long-suffering patience. And by the command of His authoritative word, “Rise, take up thy bed, and walk”, Jesus revealed Himself as the Lord of Hosts, possessing divine authority. As St Cyril of Alexandria teaches: “The Lord did not pray for the man’s healing, lest He be perceived as merely one of the holy prophets; but as the Lord of Powers, He commands with authority that it be accomplished.”

Moreover, the Lord wished to manifest His infinite compassion and His abundant mercy. Wherever the Saviour appears, there also is salvation. “Whether He beholds a publican sitting at the tax booth, He makes him an apostle and evangelist; whether He descends among the dead, He raises the dead to life. To the blind, He grants sight; to the deaf, hearing. And He walks among the pools, not seeking buildings, but healing the sick.”

The story of the paralytic, as recounted in today’s Gospel reading, is presented as a vivid example of the power of patience, especially when we are tried by illness and diverse afflictions. Let us heed the exhortation of St James the Brother of the Lord,

who says: “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing”(James 1:2-4, KJV). And this same teaching is echoed by the Lord Himself: “In your patience possess ye your souls”(Luke 21:19, KJV).

In these difficult times, beloved brethren, when it is hard to hold onto anything stable, let us preserve and guard what is most precious above all, our soul. Through patience, the soul remains in good disposition and in a state of peace.

For, as the Lord says: “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”(Matthew 16:26, KJV).

And as the great Origen notes: “Indeed, no man can give anything as an exchange for his soul; but God has given for the soul of us all the precious Blood of Jesus.”

The word of Jesus to the paralytic who lay by the pool—“Wilt thou be made whole?”—reveals two important truths: first, that the Lord is nigh, as the divine Apostle Paul writes to the Philippians, “The Lord is at hand” (Philippians 4:5, KJV), meaning He is near to us at every moment; and second, that the Lord honours human free will. As St Methodius of Olympus says: “Man, being self-governing and sovereign, has a free will and autonomous disposition, choosing for himself what is good.”

The paralytic man of today’s Gospel reading stands as an example not only of patience but also of hope. St John Chrysostom remarks that our Lord Jesus Christ, among other things, wished to show that the paralytic, through his affliction, had become virtuous and was deemed worthy of mercy and divine benefaction: “He who was worthy of mercy and benefaction, him the all-caring and philanthropic Lord beheld before all others.”

The divinely inspired Apostle Paul speaks of the power and effect of hope, drawing upon the Holy Scriptures, saying: “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (Romans 15:4, KJV).

And the foremost among the Apostles, Peter, binds hope to the Resurrection of our Saviour Jesus Christ, proclaiming: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead”

(1 Peter 1:3, KJV).

In other words, beloved brethren, God the Father, through His abundant mercy and compassion, has regenerated us, granting us hope in eternal blessings. And He has made this hope living through the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, let us proclaim together with the hymnographer:

“O Lord, it was not the pool that healed the paralytic,
but Thy word renewed him.
Nor did his long infirmity hinder him,
for the power of Thy voice was shown to be swifter;
it cast off the unbearable weight,
and he bore the burden of his bed,
as a testimony to the multitude of Thy compassions.
Glory be to Thee!” (Matins, Stichera, Glory).

Amen. Many happy returns to all, blessed and peaceful. Christ is Risen!”

Following the Dismissal of the Divine Liturgy, refreshments were served, and thereafter, a meal was offered by the Community Council, during which His Beatitude once again addressed those gathered.

From the General Secretariat

























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