

Today in the Holy Gospel we read of the healing of the paralytic who was lowered by his friends through the roof of the house of Christ and was healed by Him, and we celebrate the memorial of St. Gregory Palamas. I would like to start with the latter.

St. Gregorius Palamas is known for his defense of hesychasm , the life in silence and solitude as it was mainly practiced and is practiced by the monks on Mount Athos and in which the Jesus prayer is central . "Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy on me, sinner." The monks said that if this is done correctly with a very specific breathing technique, eventually the Divine Light, the Uncreated Light will be revealed. This was considered by others to be an illusion and that is why St. Gregorius was send to defend this technique and the beholding of the Divine Light. It is thanks to St. Gregory that we still practice the Jesus prayer, although we, who live in the world and not in silence and seclusion, are advised not to practice that particular breathing technique. Also because we usually do not have access to a thorough spiritual father and daily confession. The striking thing about Hl. Gregory Palamas is that he not only defended this exalted way of life but also emphasized a life grounded in the practice of orthodoxy. See especially his letter to the nun Xenia , in the philokalia , which can safely be called a summary of the orthodox faith . A orthodox catechesis in a nutshell .

The basis of his defense of hesychasm lay with the incarnation of God , the fact that the invisible , unattainable God had been given a face in Jesus Christ , so it is a nice continuation of last Sunday , the Sunday v.d. Orthodoxy, in which the veneration of icons also has its basis in the incarnation of God. The point here is that in the Christian life it is not enough to have ideas about God but also to experience Him, just as we can experience the rays of the sun or of an open fire as warmth. His Grace can become tangible, it is more than just an idea.

Then we have the gospel reading about the healing of the paralytic who is brought to Christ by his friends through the roof of the house. So many people have come to Christ that they cannot enter the house. This is at the time when Jesus' star is rising. He has performed miracles and that is what people come to. He's starting to get famous. Later, some of the same people will cry out for his crucifixion. Our friends who carry the paralytic cannot come to Christ because of the crowds. So they climb on the roof to reach Christ. The fathers explain this as follows; The crowd is our busy life, the life that we ourselves have created and that keeps us busy. Our career, the goals we set ourselves, living up to the self-image we have, living up to the image we like to give to others about ourselves. The pressure society puts on us to gain its approval. We will have to rise above that to reach Christ. That means effort. Climbing the roof will certainly have required effort and people will have looked up to it, perhaps disapproved of it. But we ignore all that if we only have one goal in mind; reaching Christ. The busy life within us paralyzes us, makes us blind, and we will

have to make a serious effort to overcome this so that we can be where Christ is.

And now the most striking aspect of this healing. It's not the paralyzed person who makes the effort, it's his friends who do it. He himself does nothing at all and of course he does not, after all he was paralyzed. It is his friends who lay him at Christ's feet so that he can heal him. So it says: When Jesus saw their faith, yes ; their faith ; He said to the paralytic, Your sins are forgiven thee. So he heals the paralytic because of the faith of his friends. By their faith, they knew that they had to come to Christ at all costs to have the paralytic healed. There not only their faith in Christ is expressed, but also their love for the paralytic. And so shall it be among us. If one of us is paralyzed by sin and can no longer approach Christ, then it is our friends, our brothers and sisters in Christ, who, through their love for the paralytised one and through their faith and their effort, ensure that there is healing. That's called the Christian community, that's what the Church is. We are so used to seeing ourselves as islands, that we have to solve everything ourselves, but as a Christian you are not alone, you have your brothers and sisters to carry you to Christ. If we could only accept that !.