

Diocese of Mississauga, Vancouver and Western Canada

# PRINCE OF PEACE

APRIL 2019 THE GREAT LENT

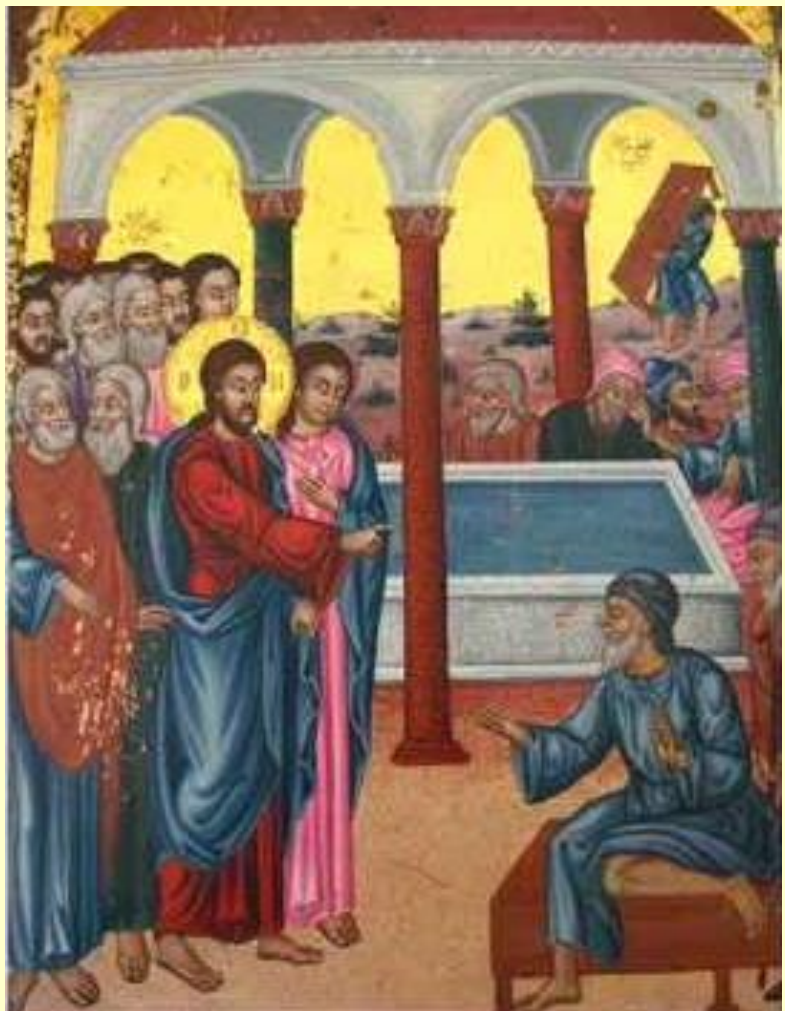
Healing of the  
Infirm Man

John 5

5 And a certain  
man was there,  
which had an  
infirmity thirty and  
eight years.

.....

8 Jesus saith unto  
him, Rise, take up  
thy bed, and walk.



**TIME TO GET OUT OF BED: HOMILY ON THE HEALING OF THE PARALYZED MAN [IMPARTED]**

We all know what it's like to want to stay in bed in the morning. We're sleepy, comfortable, and warm; we would like to turn off the alarm clock and go back to sleep. Now it's fine to do that occasionally, when we really don't need to get up and get going. But if we get in the habit of sleeping in, we'll probably lose our jobs, neglect our families, do poorly in school, and be less than the people God wants us to be.

And if we're tempted to stay in bed sometimes, imagine how the paralyzed man in our gospel reading felt. He had probably stayed in bed his whole life; he could move only if people carried him. But Jesus Christ not only forgave his sins that day, He gave him the ability to stand up and walk. In fact, He commanded Him to "arise, take up your bed, and go to your home." He was to get on with living the new life that Christ had given him.

We don't know how this man felt; he was probably profoundly grateful to the Lord for changing His life. But think for a minute about how hard it may have been for him to obey Christ's command. He knew how to live as a paralyzed person, how to be dependent upon others. That's probably the only life he had known and suddenly that changed. I imagine that that could be unsettling and scary.

Sometimes even people who know that they have ruined their lives are often terrified by the possibility of living differently. They may not like how they've lived so far, but at least they know how to live that way, they know what to expect. They've become comfortable with their lifestyles at some level, no matter how miserable they are. The same may have been true of this paralyzed man. So, it was probably with fear and trembling that He got up, picked up his bed, and walked home.

In this season of Great Lent, we are all called to see ourselves in this paralyzed man. For we have become too comfortable with our own sins,

our own habits of thought, word, and deed, even though they have weakened and distorted us. Despite our best intentions, we live like slaves to our self-centered desires: pride, envy, anger, lust, self-righteousness, fear, laziness, and gluttony so easily paralyze us. Sin has put down roots in our bad habits of how we think, act, speak, and relate to others and to God. We often can't even imagine what it's like to live free from the domination of our own passions and sins. And we certainly can't heal ourselves of these spiritual sicknesses by will power. At a deep level in our souls, we find it almost impossible at times to practice self-control.

The good news is that we can all still do what so many truly repentant sinners did when they encountered Jesus Christ: In humility, they opened their lives to His mercy. They touched the hem of His garment and fell before Him; they cried, "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief" from the depths of their hearts; they left their nets, gave their goods to the poor, and literally gave up their lives to be His disciples and apostles. Like us, they were weakened by their sins and afraid of what the new life in Christ would entail. But they still obeyed—with fear and trembling—our Lord's command to: "Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house." Despite their fears and weaknesses, they moved forward, they stepped out, they pressed on in the journey to the Kingdom.

In Lent, we pray, fast, give to the needy, and mend our broken relationships with one another; as we prepare to celebrate the joy of Christ's resurrection, we should turn away from any sin, bad habit, or unhealthy relationship that isn't pleasing to God. If we take Lent seriously, we will often feel like someone recovering from paralysis or in physical therapy. We will struggle, become uncomfortable, and wrestle with fears, frustrations, and doubts. Often, we will be tempted to stay in bed, to give up and take it easy. How tragic it would have been for the man in our gospel lesson to have done that, to have disobeyed the Lord's command to embrace His healing and move forward into a new life. And how tragic it

will be for us if we choose the false comfort of our sins and passions over the glorious freedom of the children of God.

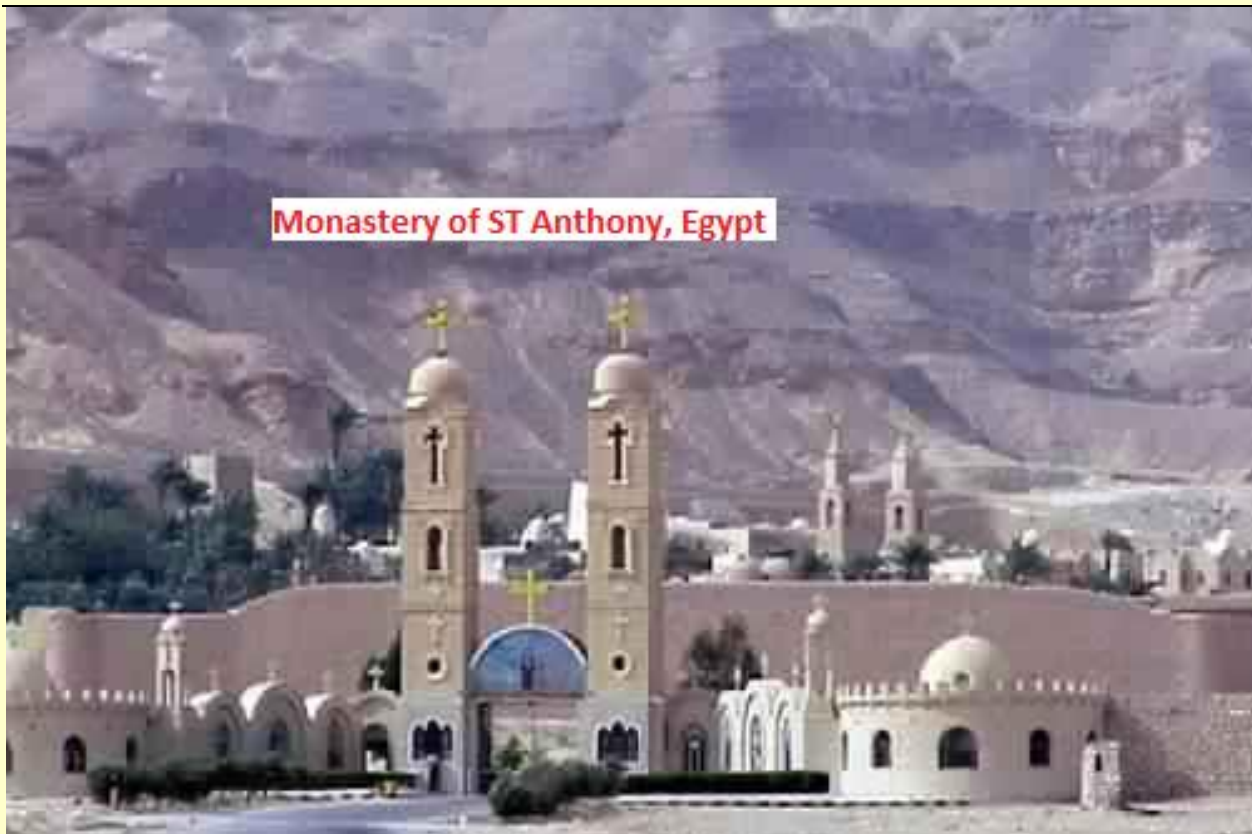
But how truly wonderful it will be for us to use Lent as a time to wake-up, to recognize that it is through the challenges of repentance that we open our lives to the healing and peace of the Lord. Let us use these few weeks to turn from the weakness and slavery of sin to enter more fully into the strength and blessedness of life eternal that shines so brightly at Pascha. For the Lord's command also applies to us: "Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house." In other words, accept and live the new life that Christ has given you. This was good, though difficult, news for the paralyzed man to receive; now it's our turn to follow his example, to trust that the Lord really can heal us, and to obey His command to get on with our lives to the glory of God.

## MONASTERY

The word monastery comes from the Greek word μοναστήριον, neut. of μοναστήριος – monasterios from μονάζειν – monazein "to live alone" from the root μόνος – monos "alone" (originally all Christian monks were hermits); the suffix "-terion" denotes a "place for doing something".

### **SPIRITUAL BACKGROUND**

Coptic Monasticism is claimed to be the original form of Monasticism as St. Anthony of Egypt became the first one to be called "monk" (Gr: μοναχός) and he was the first to establish a Christian monastery which is now known as the Monastery of Saint Anthony in the Red Sea area. St. Anthony's Monastery (also known as the Monastery of Abba Antonious) is now the oldest monastery in the world.



Although Saint Anthony's way of life was focused on solidarity, Saint Pachomius the Cenobite, a Copt from Upper Egypt, established communal monasticism in his monasteries in upper Egypt which laid the basic monastic structure for many of the monasteries today in many monastic orders (even outside Coptic Orthodoxy).

Institutional Christian monasticism seems to have begun in the deserts in AD 4th century Egypt as a kind of living martyrdom. Many Egyptian Christians went to the desert during the 3rd century and remained there to pray and work and dedicate their lives to seclusion and worship of God. This was the beginning of the monastic movement, which was organized by Anthony the Great, Saint Paul, the world's first anchorite, Saint Macarius the Great and Saint Pachomius the Cenobite in the 4th century.

The Monastery of Saint Anthony is a Coptic Orthodox monastery standing in an oasis in the Eastern Desert of Egypt, in the southern part of the Suez



Governorate. Hidden deep in the Red Sea Mountains, it is located 334 km (208 mi) southeast of Cairo. It is the oldest monastery in the world. St Anthony himself was the founder of monasticism. The Monastery of Saint Anthony was established by the followers of Saint Anthony, who is the first Christian monk. The Monastery of St. Anthony is one of the most prominent monasteries in Egypt and has strongly influenced the formation of several Coptic institutions and has promoted monasticism in general. Several patriarchs have come from the monastery, and several hundred pilgrims visit it each day.

Pachomius spent most of his time at his Pabau monastery. From his initial monastery, demand quickly grew and, by the time of his death in 345, one count estimates there were 3000 monasteries dotting Egypt from north to south. Within a generation after his death, this number grew to 7000 and then moved out of Egypt into Palestine and the Judea Desert, Syria, North Africa and eventually Western Europe.

## ABOUT ALBERTAN MONASTERY

### **ST GEORGE & ST PAUL THE ANCHORITE**

Diocese of Mississauga, Vancouver and Western Canada listened to the congregation's request to start monastic life in Alberta in order to support the spiritual needs of its communities. This pushed us to start looking for a land to build a monastery on.

We considered the following criteria in our search:

1. Large area – at least 120 acres
2. Location in Central Alberta, in the County of Red Deer. This County is currently zoned as AG Zoning, which allows projects like monasteries.
3. A land without existing buildings that could limit our vision for the Monastery/Retreat Centre
4. Clean land – clear from pipelines, gas lines, and existing oil wells; to avoid future environmental concerns, to limit the concerns from lenders, and to avoid future expansion limits

5. No water channels such as lakes, ravines, and rivers that run through the land; to avoid environmental reserves and environmental precautions
6. Land topography to be accessible and easily developed
7. Healthy top soil for agricultural purposes

The monastery charity found a suitable land, 10 minutes east of Red Deer in Central Alberta that could serve all churches in Alberta.

The best land we found is 144 acres of bare land located on the corner of Highway 11 and RR 263. The land title address is NE 1/4; Section 16; Township 38; Range 26 W4M, Red Deer County, Alberta. The price of the land is \$1,080,000.

Right now, the board is processing the due diligence (the environmental assessment, geotechnical study, utilities availability and the County permit approvals) to assure the land's suitability.

Stantec is contracted to process the permits with the County of Red Deer. Currently, \$650K has been raised but \$500K is still required before the offer condition removals in August 2019.

Also, more funds are required to connect the utilities to the new building.

### **MONASTERY PODCAST**

The monastery website is [www.sgspmonastery.ca](http://www.sgspmonastery.ca). Feel free to support the monastery directly through the website. Your contributions are highly appreciated.

The contact email is [info@sgspmonastery.ca](mailto:info@sgspmonastery.ca)