

LETTER FROM JESUS TO A MAN

Congratulations, dear friend!

I am writing this letter to you, although I would like to speak with you personally and alone. I know you always had enough time to do this. Yesterday morning, for example, I waited a long time for you to wake up and make plans with Me for the day ahead, to give you strength, and confidence for difficult tasks. Instead, you turned away to continue dreaming for a few more minutes.

Then, you just didn't have time. You washed, brushed your teeth thoroughly, dressed carefully, and combed your hair. You took one last look in the mirror, and went to the door. At some point, when your gaze came across the Bible, I thought you wanted to read My Word. But you left closing the door tightly.

During the day, I tried again and again to start a conversation with you. I waited for this moment. Do you remember breakfast? The delicious food, fragrant tea - it's all from Me. However, you didn't even think about it, not to mention the words of gratitude.

After a nutritious lunch, you breathed heavily, and I stood by and waited for you to tell Me about your sore and depressing soul, and ask for help. But some thought, obviously very important to you, distracted your attention, and your thoughts twisted, looking for a way out. The pain you felt today, you have been feeling for a long time. Every day, your problems pounded on you, with such a burden, that they affected everything else. It became very difficult for you. Why did you not turn to Me?

Remember the bad news that caught you by surprise? I was near you at the time. I so longed to dry your tears, and even tried to do it in My own way. I sent you a light, warm breeze, birds, so that they would cheerfully twitter and sing you away from bitter thoughts, the sun, the blue sky...it's all for you. Again, you did not understand, you have not spoken to Me.

In the evening, when you came from work, you did not think of Me. You dined quickly, switched on the TV, and the television programs captured you for a long time. Are they more interesting than communicating with Me? Are the problems even more important that they didn't leave you in the evening?

You're tired for the day - I understand you well. I do not blame you for falling into bed almost in exhaustion. In such a state, it is difficult to pray, to think of the spiritual, but I still hoped for it. At some moment, the thought of Me flashed through you, but a dream quickly seized you. You didn't resist. So, I waited...I wanted to remember, with you, about the day that had passed, to analyze it. Believe that I would comfort you, soothe your pain.... But you didn't want to....

Just as the new day comes, remember Me. Remember, that I am always with you!

Fourth Pascal Sunday – Sunday of the Paralytic

Today, in times of global economic and moral crisis, in the press, or in simple human conversation, one can often find that many people feel lonely, left out, abandoned, deprived of any attention, care and support, get into various depressive states, or ailments.

The story of Jesus healing a paralyzed man, who had been ill for 38 years, reminds us that we are never alone. Even when there are no people close to us who can support us, Christ is always with us. All we need to do is remember this and firmly believe in this truth. We need to learn to put our hope in God and His support in the different circumstances of life. This will help us restore peace of mind and find the meaning of life. Make Christ the center and foundation of our life, a source of peace and hope. Let us remember the words that Jesus Christ said to the apostles before his Ascension: ***"Behold, I am with you always unto the end of the age."***

At a place called Vitesda, which in Hebrew means, "The House of Mercy," people would come to be healed by the water stirred by an angel. They, of course, were not healed by the water, but rather by the power of God working through the water. Water was only an outward sign of the action of God's power, of God's love and mercy.

From the history of the church, we learn that Jesus Christ gave people many different external signs and sources of healing, sources of God's grace and love, and His presence in the world. In addition to the sacred sacraments, such signs are the incorruptible relics of the saints and the miraculous Icons of the Virgin. Through them, and especially through the lessons of the Virgin and the Saints, Christ continues to wonderfully heal people of various ailments by the power of their faith, to show them His love and mercy. After all, Christ has not changed since his Ascension until today. He remains the same and His Divine power has not changed. God then gave people signs of blessing and healing, as He does today. The apostle Paul says in a letter to the Jews, "Jesus Christ yesterday and today is the same forever."

Here's what this Sunday evening's Sticheron tells us: "At the Sheep's Gate (also called Vitesda), in Jerusalem, lay a weak man, and, seeing the Lord, he cried, I have no man that would cast me into the waters that were stirred up! For when I come, the other is ahead of me and becomes healthy, and I continue to be weak." The Savior graces him and says, "For your sake I became a man, and for your sake I was incarnate. Take up your mat and walk! Everything is possible for you." We have seen the Lord's Pascha, the bright and glorious Resurrection. But we also see our own selves. Like the Apostle Thomas, we will sometimes doubt. Like the myrrh-bearing women, we will sometimes grieve over the death of Christ within the tomb of our hearts. Like the paralytic in today's Gospel reading, we will have to wait patiently, perhaps even for a lifetime, enduring the paralysis of our passions.

Christ is risen, and like Thomas, we will one day behold Him risen from the dead with our own eyes. Like the myrrh-bearing women, we will see the stone of our hearts rolled away. Like the paralytic, we will one day hear the voice of Christ bidding us to "arise and walk towards the paths that are straight." But, what we do now and always, is irrevocably our own choice. We must still choose to believe, as did Thomas. We must still choose to enter within our hearts, as did the myrrh-bearers. We must still choose to actually get up and walk, as did the paralytic. The miracle of God is that we are given the power to do this. Yet it will not be done for us.

Let us pray that the Lord will grant us the faith to bare patiently our spiritual infirmities. Above all, let us together glorify, with our whole heart, Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life.

Fr. Serhii Deiak

