

# Christ

*the Physician of our Souls and Bodies*

“Let it Be Done for You as You Wish”

## January Catechetical Reflection



CATECHETICAL YEAR 2021-22  
EASTERN CATHOLIC CHURCHES OF AMERICA

Σωτηρία (soteria) is the Greek word for salvation. It means to rescue, to deliver, to save, and in the patristic tradition, to heal from spiritual diseases. The emphasis on healing of spiritual disease has become so prominent in our holy faith there is a word that describes one who is an expert in the field of spiritual healing; the nosologist, who diagnoses and works towards the healing of spiritual diseases.

As the church grew in her mission she moved from a simple call to “repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins” (cf. Acts 2:38) to a fuller consciousness to develop in the spiritual life, to complete soteria.

One sees this in the new genre of pastoral literature produced by St. Chrysostom, Gregory the Great, and Gregory of Nazianzus. All of these fathers are moving from what may be understood as a more surgical approach in St. Paul’s epistles to a more medicinal or remedial mode of healing—from merely being saved to complete spiritual freedom. Jesus’ many miraculous healing explains this mature transition in literature because the aim of physical-temporal-healing is always purposed towards spiritual-eternal-healing.

This is why Jesus is so saddened when only one healed leper out of ten returns to him to give thanks. “He threw himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him” (Luke 17:15). The leper came back *and then* received his full healing, not simply the superficial healing of his bodily ailment. For this reason, Jesus says to him “Rise and go; your faith has made you well.”

The fathers of the church, not least those mentioned above became ever more conscious, through the stories and experiences of demonic warfare, like those stories found in the Life of St. Anthony, that the path to healing was found in overcoming the demonic attacks of the enemy, Satan.

We find justification for this mature appreciation of soteria/healing from demons in the story of the healing of the daughter of the Canaanite woman.

Matthew 15:21-28 reads:

Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, “Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon.” But he did not answer her at all.

And his disciples came and urged him, saying, "Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us."

He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me."

He answered, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table."

Then Jesus answered her, "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed instantly. (New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition)

Again, Jesus says "great is your faith!" and her daughter was healed. So often we Christians come to God with mediocre desires. We want physical healing, physical things, and mere inclusion into the body of Christ, baptism. Our prayer life is limited to these immature wishes. We are baptized, we ask God to help us in physical difficulties, we only take salvation so far, and we forget that the ultimate aim is freedom from the demonic, freedom to live a spiritual life. We forget that "if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36), i.e., total freedom.

Jesus taught that the kingdom, though it started as a mustard seed, would develop into a great tree ( Matthew 13:31–32). The fathers understood this and wrote their pastoral epistles to fulfill this promise.

We must move from the starting line of faith, to run the race, to completion at the finish line. Allow the kingdom of God to grow in you. Attain completed salvation; turn your prayer life into a rich spiritual harvest. Allow the son to set you free and to complete the work of healing which began at baptism. By faith, ask the Son for your healing, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.