



My Beloved Ones,

This Sunday, the Second Sunday of Great Lent represents a decisive point in our Triodion journey—that is, the period from the three weeks before Great Lent, all the way through Holy Week. In this week’s beautiful Gospel passage taken from Mark, we see how important trust is, in cultivating a relationship with our Creator.

Our Lord sought to connect Himself to the people in different ways: either through teaching and preaching God’s Will, or through enacting miracles for those in need. This Sunday’s event is a miracle; a miracle performed in the city of Capernaum, one of the four cities that are personally connected with our Lord (the other three being Bethlehem, the city of His Birth; Nazareth, the city in which He grew up

with Mary, His Mother, and Joseph, His Protector; and Jerusalem, the city of His Passion and Resurrection). Capernaum is the city in which He performed a great many miracles, including this Sunday’s Healing of the Paralytic.

This Man had four dear friends whose love for him—and their Faith in God—was so great, that they went out of their way to assist their friend in visiting the house where Jesus was preaching to the townspeople. In fact, the house was so crowded, with people spilling outside, that the Paralytic’s friends faced the problem of how they could see the Lord face-to-face. So great was their desire, they enacted something that is unthinkable to many: they removed the roof of the person’s house. This they did, not out of an evil spirit, but because of a burning desire to assist their friend. They lowered him through the roof of the home, because they understood Jesus when He said, *“What is impossible with men is possible with God” (Luke 18:27)*.

Seeing the Paralytic lying before Him, Jesus did something very unusual for Him. Ordinarily, Christ would ask those coming before Him, *“Do you wish to receive your sight?” “What do you want me to do for you?”* He asks such questions out of respect for that most precious gift God gave to us: Free Will. In the case of the Paralytic, however, He does not ask the Paralytic. Instead, He says, *“My son, your sins are forgiven.” (Mark 2:5)*. Naturally, this caused a scandal, for among the crowd were Pharisees and other keepers of the Law, who were critical of Jesus. They thought, *“Why does this man speak thus? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?” (Mark 2:7)* Others in the crowd were afraid for a very different reason: hearing Jesus boldly forgive a man’s sins,

they imagined the man's paralysis was caused by his sins—and that the same could happen to them!

Christ of course, as the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, knew the hardness of their hearts, and He replied, *“Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise, take up your pallet and walk’? But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins—he said to the paralytic— I say to you, rise, take up your pallet and go home. And he rose, and immediately took up the pallet and went out before them all; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, “We never saw anything like this!””* (Mark 2:9-12) This reading asks us to seriously consider our relationship with God—and not for His sake, but ours. A trusting relationship with God—such as that shown by the Paralytic and his friends—means that we can live a life of peace, relying on the help of our Father, who is in Heaven.

Consider this story of a ship in the Mediterranean, full of many passengers, including, the son of the Captain. One evening, there is a great storm, and ship is tossed back and forth on the waves. All the passengers are afraid: they are trying to understand what is happening, trying to protect themselves, or shouting at one another—all except the Captain's Son.

Even more afraid of the boy's calmness, one passenger says, “Don't you see what is happening? Why are you not afraid?”

“Why should I be afraid?” the Boy says, “my father is not afraid.”

Such is the refuge we can each take in a trusting relationship with our loving Father. This trust can only be built when we continue to participate in the life of the Church, including the Divine Liturgy and the Sacraments. This is in fact the reason the Church exists. Just as we can view the Church as a Hospital for sinners like ourselves, it is also like a port where can all find comfort and peace, living in harmony and trust with all our Brothers and Sisters in Christ.

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Metropolitan of Atlanta