

his physical cure, would have to be his firm struggle to be cured from the passions of pleasure-loving and of avarice.

#### **A cure with eternal dimensions**

Christ did not come to the world to make all those physically sick, well. He did not come to give us a simple extension of our biological life. He came to cleanse us from our sins and to grant us eternal life, which is not threatened either by sickness or by death. And this eternal life, as Christ revealed it to us in His high priestly prayer, is that we come to know and believe in the only true God and His Son, whom He sent, in order to save the world (Jn. 17:3).

So for this reason also, the Church, in tomorrow's service of the Trithekte (3rd Monday of the Fast) calls us with the troparion of the prophecy, to ask Christ: "because we are sick and paralyzed from our sins, cure the crushed pieces of our soul, Oh Philanthropic Lord, You who are the Doctor of our souls, and know our heart well".

Archim. B. L.

#### **SUNDAY, MARCH 4, 2018 SUNDAY OF ST. GREGORY PALAMAS**

*Gerasimus the Righteous of Jordan, Paul & his sister Juliana and their Companions, Daniel, Prince of Moscow, Gregory, Bishop of Constance*

**TONE OF THE WEEK :** *Plagal Second Tone*

**EOTHINON :** *Second Orthros Gospel*

**EPISTLE READING:** *St. Paul's Letter to Hebrews 11:24-26, 32-40*

**GOSPEL Reading:** *Mark 2:1-12*

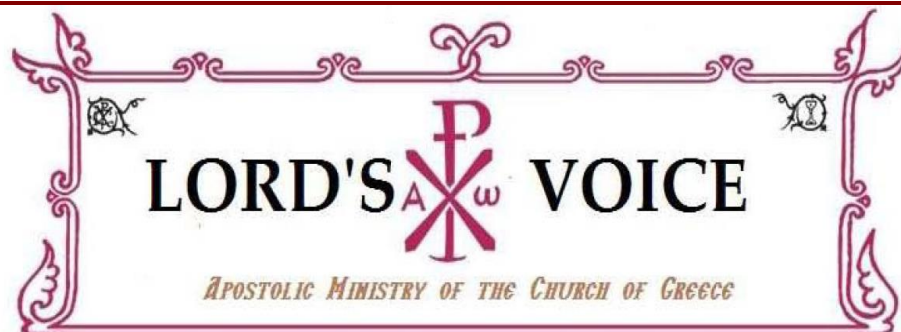
**NEXT SUNDAY, MARCH 11, 2018 SUNDAY OF THE HOLY CROSS,**  
*Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem, Pionios the Presbyter, Theodora the Righteous, George the New Wonderworker of Constantinople, Trophimos and Thallos the Martyrs*

**EPISTLE READING:** *St. Paul's Letter to Hebrews 4:14-16, 5:1-6*

**GOSPEL Reading:** *Mark 8:34-38, 9:1*

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66<sup>TH</sup> YEAR

MARCH 4 2018

PAMPHLET # 9 (3379)

## **THE DOUBLE PRESENCE**

If a certain sick person goes to the doctor, and the doctor receives him with the words "your sins are forgiven", it is natural for him to consider it a mockery. Certainly the sick person will think: "I probably came to a wrong person".

### **Doctor and God**

In today's gospel passage however, we see that they who were transporting the paralytic, were so certain that they came to the appropriate person, that, when they ascertained that they couldn't enter due to the crowding, they did the unheard of thing: They took apart the roof and lowered him before Christ from the shingles.

Obviously, this faith made them not consider the words of Christ to the paralytic: "Child, your sins are forgiven" a mockery. And so, as opposed, on the one hand, to the scandalized scribes, but in agreement with all those truly "seeking the face of the God of Jacob", they began understanding that Christ, to whom they came, is not only a doctor of bodies, but also of souls. He is able to cure both paralyses, "the double paralysis: the one, on the one hand, from the sins, while the other, on the other hand, from that

## THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK 2:1-12

At that time, Jesus entered Capernaum and it was reported that he was at home. And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room for them, not even about the door; and he was preaching the word to them. And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and when they had made an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic lay. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "My son, your sins are forgiven." Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, "Why does this man speak thus? It is a blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, "Why do you question thus in your hearts? 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!"

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of the body" (Saint John Chrysostom). Consequently, this doctor is not just a human but also God. Since, aside from the supernatural cure of the physical paralysis, He gives two more marks of his Godhead: First, that He knows the hearts of men. Only God knows the interior of each one. "You alone know the heart of all sons of men" says the Holy Scripture (3 Kings 8:39). And second, that He is able to forgive sins, since only God has such authority: "I am the one who wipes out your iniquities and I shall not remember", says the Prophet Isaiah (43:25).

This is not the only time when Christ showed that the paralysis of the body may be a consequence of the paralysis of

soul. After the cure of the paralytic of Bethesda, when He met him again in the temple, He told him: "See, now you became well. Be careful from now on, to not sin anymore, so that you not suffer anything worse" (Jn. 5:14).

### The most dangerous sickness

And the illness of the body may not always be a result of the sins of the sick person, as in the case of the man born blind (Jn. 9:1-3), however the "paralysis" of the soul is always due to the sins of man. It is a paralysis, which, precisely because it deprives us of the capability of "walking" towards God, ends up fatal, since it can separate us definitively from Him. It sets out from indolence and constantly putting off the work of the divine commandments, and sooner or later, it ends up in the full indifference for our salvation.

The mercy however, of God "pursues us" and often allows afflictions so that we remember Him. "In affliction, O Lord, I remembered you. In small affliction is our chastisement from you" (Is. 26:16). Just that we only remember Him as a doctor of the body. The paralysis of the soul makes us see Him and His Church as an umbrella, for us to be protected at the time of afflictions, which usually we close, and put off to the side, as soon as the "storm" passes.

Thus our essential paralysis remains uncured. So for this reason, Christ also hastens to remind the paralytic of Capernaum, that He first needs to forgive his sins and his cure from the passions, and afterwards the cure of the body.

It is noteworthy that the Saints followed this pastoral care, even when they had to face sick people of other religions. When once a Turk in Cavaglia asked from Saint Kosmas Aitolos to cure him from an incurable illness, the Saint first asked him to promise that he would stop getting drunk, and that he would give the one 10<sup>th</sup> of his estate as charity to the poor. The Turk's "payment" for