

key for Christ to be able to illumine our being and to transfigure it.

The paralytic of Capernaum was not able to take off the roof himself, of the house in which Christ was. However, He had four friends near him. I wonder, who does each one of us resemble? The paralytic or his friends? Or maybe do we resemble the observers of Christ and the taking off of the roof, or even worse, the scribes who condemned? Let each of us give the answer, as Great Lent proceeds, by the intercessions of Saints.

Fr. T. M.

**SUNDAY, MARCH 15, 2020, SUNDAY OF ST. GREGORY**

**PALAMAS**, *Agapius the Martyr & His Companions, Manuel the New Martyr of Crete, Holy Apostle Aristobulos of the Seventy, Bishop of Britain*

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

**EOTHINON :** *Sixth Eothinon Gospel*

**EPISTLE READING:** *St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews 1:10-14; 2:1-3*

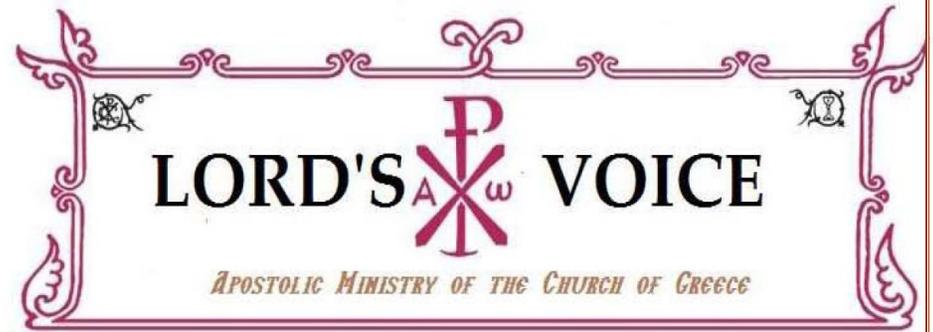
**GOSPEL READING:** *Mark 2:1-12*

**SUNDAY, MARCH 22, 2020 SUNDAY OF THE HOLY**

**CROSS**, *Basil the Holy Martyr of Ancyra, Kalliniki & Vassilisa the Martyrs, Euthemios the New Martyr*

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

**GOSPEL READING:** *8:34-38; 9:1*



68<sup>TH</sup> YEAR    MARCH 15 2020    PAMPHLET #11 (3485)

**"WE NEVER SAW ANYTHING LIKE THIS!"**

When Christ was in Capernaum, He was preaching in a home where there was a great crowd. So, one could not even approach outside of the door in order to listen to Him. At that point, four people opened the roof of the home and lowered the bedridden paralytic before Christ, Who admired their faith, power, and inventiveness. As a result, He initially forgave the paralytic's sins, and when perceiving the reactions of the scribes of the mosaic law, their hardheartedness, and their disbelief in His person, Christ also granted physical health to the paralytic. Thus, He inspired all those present to glorify God, as they exclaimed that they had never seen such signs.

With this gospel narration (Mark 2:1-12), our Church closes the second week of Lent. As Great Lent proceeds, each one of us is called to remember its first days. Just as time helps us get used to fasting, simultaneously, it creates the feeling of complacency. That is also why spiritual figures of our faith, like Saint Gregory Palamas are exemplified, in order for us to combine the lessons of the Gospel with the lives of the Saints, and for us to return to the spiritual struggle. Lent is an arena: whoever endures to the end comes out a victor.

## 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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### The scribes and the observers

A sign – key, is taking the roof down! The scribes, people with their soul's roof closed, did not do this, who did not allow the light of Christ's presence to enter in and to illumine them. They aren't allowing others to fit into their hearts, but they are filled with the sense of self sufficiency that they are well. The attitude of the people who are securing their position in the house, shows that there are those who want Christ for their own

selves, and they don't care if there are also others who want to see Him, to hear Him, to meet Him, to be healed by Him. They don't want to share Christ with others, resulting in their soul resembling a pharisaical area, that wants God for individual glory and attempts to prevent Him from shining before the world and others.

### The stone heart

We also need to take down the roof, in regards to the passionate thoughts and the attacks of sin, which make our heart "stony." They make us be occupied only with our own self. They make us see the others as objects to be used. To look to take from them, to control them, to condemn them, to sin with them. So our soul becomes stony, because we are not able to find true joy in our life. Hunting authority, pleasure-loving, and selfishness is a delusion. It gives the false sense that only thus is man able to find joy, but it undermines man's ability to see the world spiritually. So true joy is found in communion with God, in the fruits of the Holy Spirit, which makes our being "fleshly", in other words, sensitive, giving, loving, open to God's longsuffering and forgiveness, since we "forgive our debtors" (Mt. 6:12), defeating the vain thoughts.

### The secular spirit

We also need to take off the roof in relation to the world itself. The mind and heart have become absorbed by the suggestions of the secular way of life. Sin, iniquity, the way of our age, which is based on our rights, and gives amnesty, justifying every deviation of ours, shows us that the roof of our being, is closed to God, to the Gospel and to love. So for this reason also, taking down the roof which prayer, asceticism, the struggle for virtue and love for others can do us, comprises the