

My Beloved Ones,

As we approach the Second Sunday of Lent, the appointed Gospel is a testament to the power of faith. Our Lord was teaching in Capernaum, the small fishing village on the Sea of Galilee. By this point in His ministry, Jesus was respected and widely known. For this reason, Jesus was preaching to a fully crowded household.

In fact, the house was so crowded, that a paralytic was unable to get past the door. However, the four men who carried the paralytic's bed were determined. These men removed the very roof under which Jesus was teaching, lowering the paralytic in front of the Lord. The Lord was deeply moved by this display of faith, saying to the paralytic. *"My son, your sins are forgiven."* (Mark 2:5) Naturally, some of the Scribes who were in attendance were scandalized, though they would not say so. Instead they thought, *"Why does this man speak thus? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"* (Mark 2:7)

Christ of course, as the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, knew their hearts, and in turn questioned them. *"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."* (Matthew 2:9-11) Immediately, the paralytic took up his bed and went home, with all the people amazed by the miracle.

There are two key things to be seen in this reading. The first, and most notable, is Christ's admonition to the scribes for hardening their hearts. First, they fail to acknowledge or understand that Christ is God. But they are just as equally guilty of being so faithful to the letter of the Law, that they lose sight of its compassionate spirit.

However, I believe that the Gospel reading has an important message for those of us who *do* now recognize Christ as Lord. Keep in mind the paralytic. Here, we see a man who was constantly in the vulnerable position of being carried around and attended to by others. In a world without medical technology and an understanding of disabilities, his existence was likely a very lonely one.

Now he hears of a great prophet and teacher; a miracle-worker—the Messiah! But when the paralytic arrives, it is far too late to pass through the doorway. We are now faced with another possibility: he could have been discouraged by the crowd. He could have fallen into sadness or bitterness and demanded that his friends return him to his home. Instead, he and his fellows did not lose heart. So eager were they that their friend might be able to hear and see the Lord, that they lowered this man and his bed through the roof! For this display of belief and courage, Christ chooses to reveal Himself to all in His fullness, as the Creator and healer of all living things.

May we too, in the depths of our struggles, and during the remainder of the Fast, model our own lives after this brave paralytic, who never lost sight of what was truly important: to hear the voice of our Lord. In doing so, may our faith be strengthened, and thus, worthy enough to be saved ourselves, by His loving-kindness.

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