

My Beloved Ones,

When many of our blessed saints allowed themselves to build up a relationship with God, they gained a greater sense of spiritual understanding, which often gave them the ability to perform healings and other miracles. This is demonstrated in this Sunday's Gospel, where we see our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, *"...healing every disease and every infirmity among the people"* (Matthew 9:35). The Evangelist makes a point to stress that this was not simply limited to healing two blind men, but that Christ also had power over the demons.

As Christ tells the Disciples when they found themselves unable to free a demoniac, *"...this kind does not come out except by prayer and fasting"* (Matthew 17:21). Our Lord means that the ability to cast out demons can only be accomplished when a person fully devotes himself or herself to God's Word; when he or she truly lives out His Commandments and strives to apply God's Will to their own lives. Of course, this is something that sounds not only above and beyond the abilities of most, but even anathema to today's materially and logically oriented society. However, it is simply a decision that we must make, to give ourselves over to a lifestyle that is totally Godly oriented.

The Evangelist demonstrates how difficult such a decision is, when he shows how those blind men treated Christ after He healed them. Even after following Him, crying out, they disregard His command to *"See that no one knows of this.' But they went away and spread the news about him throughout that district."* (Matthew 9:30-31) Even after of such a miraculous event, these men demonstrate that human weakness is still in all of us. St. Paul, in this Sunday's Epistle to the Galatians writes that, we too were the victims of the Evil One. *"...while we were children, we were enslaved to the elemental spirits of the world. But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son...in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children."* (Galatians 4:3-5)

Even though we may not reach the heights of our venerable saints, if we truly live this Godly oriented life of *"...prayer and fasting"*, to the best of our abilities, we will be also able to move past our weaknesses, and, to grow in a closer connection to our Heavenly Father, which is the goal of all Orthodox Christians.

+ALEXIOS

Metropolitan of Atlanta

