

and had been greatly troubled. He'd reached the limits of despair. Seeing this unknown figure, he felt a shaking up and wanted to change his life. He asked the children where this man is, and the children answered and that the elder has reposed. When he heard this, he sat on the sidewalk and broke out into sobs.

The great miracle had occurred. The child sought a spiritual father and today he is now living a conscientious spiritual life. The living gaze of a lifeless poster, which some children saw on a column, raised to his feet, a "paralyzed" youth and set him on the path to salvation.

Archim. B.

**SUNDAY, JULY 8, 2018 6TH SUNDAY OF MATTHEW**, *The Holy Great Martyr Procopius, Theophilus the Myrrhbearer of Pantokrator Monastery, Appearance of the Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos of Kazan.*

**-tone of the week :** *Plagal of the First Tone*

**EOthinon :** *Sixth Orthros Gospel*

**Epistle Reading:** *Romans 12:6-14*

**Gospel Reading:** *Matthew 9:1-8;*

**NEXT SUNDAY, JULY 15, 2018 SUNDAY OF THE HOLY FATHERS**, *The Holy Martyrs Cyricus and His Mother Julitta, Vladimir, Equal-to-the-Apostles of Kiev, The Finding of the Head of St. Matrona of Chios, Donald and his Nine Daughters, Swithun, Bishop of Winchester*

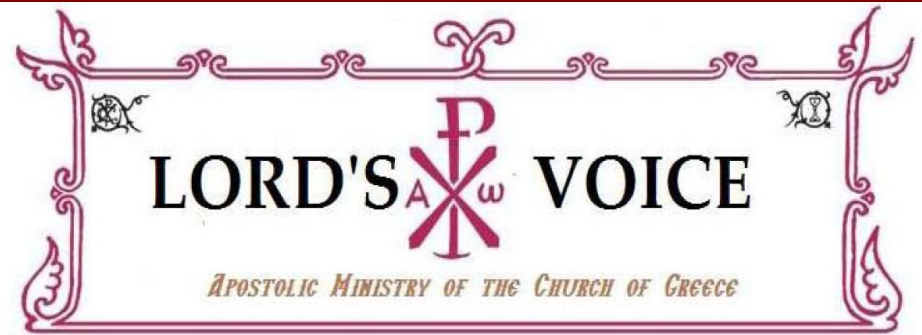
**Epistle Reading:** *Titus 3:8-15*

**Gospel Reading:** *Matthew 5:14-19*

## A NEW ACTIVITY OF THE APOSTOLIC MINISTRY

With respect to the tradition and the history of liturgical art the Apostolic Ministry of the Church of Greece is extending its activity in the production and offering of ecclesiastical vestments and other ecclesiastical goods, of high quality and art in approachable prices, aiming to cultivate ecclesiastical art and to strengthen the catechetical, missionary and social work of the Organization.

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**66<sup>TH</sup> YEAR JULY 8 2018 PAMPHLET #27 (3397)**

### "GAIN STRENGTH PARALYZED KNEES"

It is said that, when a certain king of France, Ludwig the 11th (1423-1483) was gravely ill, he called a priest to say a petition for his health. The priest, aside from the petition "for health", prayed also for "forgiveness and remission of his sins". Then, the otherwise good-souled king, as he had hospitably received many Roman refugees after the capture of Constantinople, annoyed, interrupted him saying: Father don't mix things up. Now beg God only for health. We will see about the other things.

### A ranking of petitions

Fortunately the paralytic of today's gospel passage and the people who brought him to Christ, did not react similarly, hearing Christ receiving him with the words: "courage, my child! Your sins are forgiven". They certainly didn't have the shallow mind of the French king, who did not understand that the confusion did not lie in the priest's words, but in his own superficial perception.

Christ, dissolving such confusions had said: "be ye seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Mt. 6:33). The righteousness of God is for Him to justify us and to deliver us from the criticism and the condemnation for our sins. So for this reason, the main request of our Church is not "for health", but "for remission of our sins."

## THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW 9:1-8

At that time, getting into a boat Jesus crossed over and came to his own city. And behold, they brought to him a paralytic, lying on his bed; and when Jesus saw their faith he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven." And behold, some of the scribes said to themselves, "This man is blaspheming." But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts? For which is easier, to say 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say 'Rise and walk?' But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins" he then said to the paralytic -- "Rise, take up your bed and go home." And he rose and went home. When the crowds saw it, they were afraid, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men.

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The phenomenon is grievous, for one to be taking refuge in God only for worldly things. Then his request, not only would not be pleasing to God, but would even end up sinful, even if he would be seeking it on his knees! Because we should be seeking God according to His will. And the first thing God wants, is for "all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4).

### Those straight and those sideways

Christ, healing the paralytic, after He first forgave the sins, on the one hand, gives a triumphant witness about His godhead and, on the other hand, reveals that the scribes are suffering from a worse paralysis than the healed fellow, because "they remember wicked things in their hearts". Their wicked disposition blinded them and deprives them of the capability of walking straightly and "walking" towards the true faith. For these wicked people, the Spirit of God has said: "If you walk towards me in a sideways way, I shall also walk with you in a sideways anger". In other

words, if you continue living with wickedness and without straightness, I will also behave towards you in a way which will seem wicked to you (Lev. 26:23-24).

On the contrary, the people who brought the paralytic, and obviously also the paralytic as well, was "straight in heart" and with guileless faith, which did not leave Christ unmoved. The gospel text notes that the Lord took compassion on the paralytic "seeing their faith". Such a faith of some people – parents, friends, spiritual fathers and brothers – once also led us to Christ. We owe them deep and lifelong gratitude. And the more we realize that a spiritual paralysis is threatening us, all the more we should be seeking "wound-carriers" and guides, who will lead us firmly to Christ. So much we have need of pastors, who will support us with the word of the prophet Isaiah (35:3-5): "Gain strength exhausted hands and paralyzed knees. Be strong, do not fear. Behold our God...shall come and save us". In other words, be strengthened exhausted hands and paralyzed knees. Be strengthened and do not fear. Behold, our God will come and will save us.

### The miracle of a poster

At some point God calls us and demands that we also serve in the saving work of the cure of "paralytics", and furthermore, in ways that we could never imagine. Characteristic is the following event: The children of a certain Youth Center, organizing an event dedicated to the reposed Papa-Ephraim of Katounakia, also tacked on walls posters with the Elder's picture. One week before the event, a group of these kids saw in a central road of the city, a young fellow, having stopped with his motorcycle and having hugged a column. They approached and saw him kissing the Elder's face in the poster and speaking to him, while crying. The children asked him and he responded that the gaze of this known elder had spoken to his heart. Until then he lived an unstable life