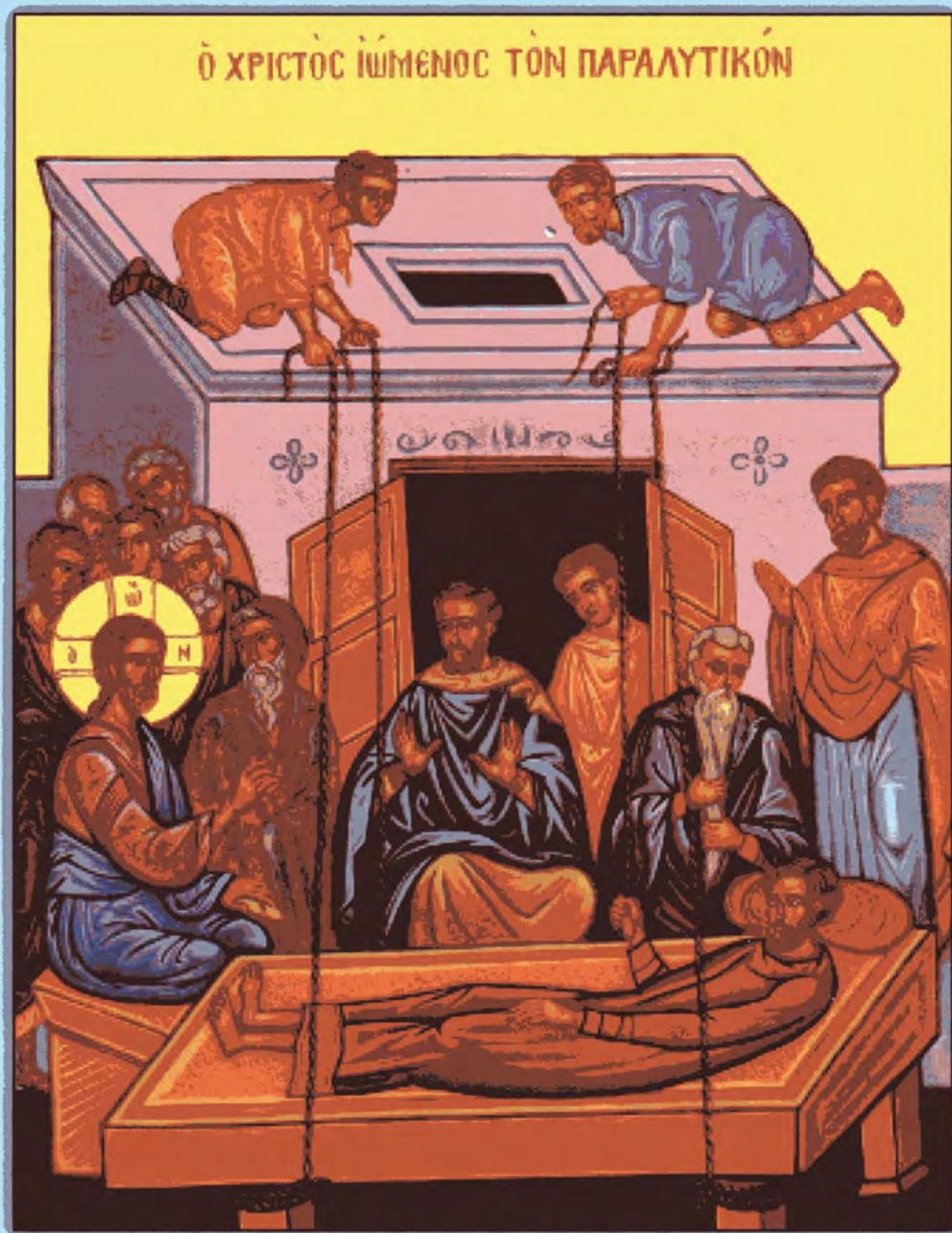


SECOND SUNDAY OF THE GREAT FAST
SUNDAY OF ST. GREGORY PALAMAS



Icon of Healing the Paralytic

Reflections on the Scripture Readings for this Weekend

On this second weekend of the Great Fast, our readings are taken from St. Paul's Letter to the Hebrews and Mark's Gospel which shares the story of Jesus curing a paralytic at Capernaum. This is truly an interesting combination of readings for this second weekend of the Fast.

Our first reading uses citations from the Psalms that were traditionally used of Jesus' messianic sonship through his resurrection and His ascension. The authorship of this letter is questioned, scholars thinking that it was not written by Paul but only attributed to him and accepted by early Christians as written by him. The letter contains citations from the Psalms that were used traditionally to indicate the messianic sonship of Jesus. These citations elevate Jesus above the angels. Given the status of Jesus, the author exhorts his readers, therefore, to pay special attention to His teachings lest one "drifts" away from the truth. The author exhorts his readers to attend all the more to what they have about Jesus and what He taught.

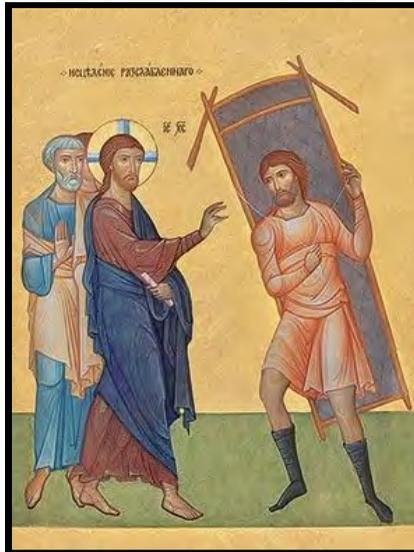
Our second reading shares the story of the curing the man at Capernaum, the home of Jesus. It clearly presents Jesus' power as the savior of mankind.

This is conveyed by the fact that Jesus proves his ability to "forgive" human misdeeds since the first words that He says to the paralytic are: *My son, your sins are forgiven*. By saying this Jesus does not indicate that the man's paralysis is a punishment for his wrongdoings. Rather, Jesus wanted to demonstrate his power not only over physical illness but also his power to forgive sins. This miracle story constitutes a transition to the conflict narratives which follow in Mark's Gospel.

So what kind of message can we derive today from these two readings? They don't seem to present a coherent message.

Again the effort of the Great Fast is to truly come to a deeper belief in the fact that Jesus is truly God's revelation to us about how we are to live as humans. He is God's

revelation and manifestation to us. His revelation is meant to cure us of any "paralysis" - any inability - to engage in personal change. This is accomplished by first believing that He is our Lord and God Who came into our world to help us understand the meaning and purpose of life. When we understand this, our spiritual paralysis is cured. He can cure us of the fear to change.



Understanding Our Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church

In the last issue I shared some thoughts about THE Lenten Prayer of our Church, the Prayer of St. Ephrem. I shared that *slothfulness* leads to *discouragement* which then leads to *ambition*. *Ambition*, in turn, leads to *vain or idle talk*.

Of all created beings, man alone has been endowed with the gift of speech. All Fathers see in it the very seal of the Divine Imaged in man because God Himself is revealed as Word. But being the supreme gift, it is by the same token the supreme danger. Like all the powers that God is sharing with humans, they can be used by us in a *positive* or *negative* way. The power can truly be a lethal power that can devastate others. Too often the spoke word is more cruel than a sharp knife.

Speech, being the very expression of man and the means of his self-fulfillment, it is for this very reason that it is also the source of man's downfall and self-destruction. Speech is most frequently the source of human betrayal. For example, consider how it was through speech that Jesus Himself was betrayed. The power of the spoken word is more dangerous than we can imagine.

The word saves and the word kills. The word inspires and the word poisons. The word is the means of Truth and it is the means of demonic Lie. Having an ultimate positive



power, it has therefore a tremendous negative power. When deviated from its Divine origin and purpose, the word becomes *idle*. It enforces *sloth*, *despondency* and *lust of power*, and *transforms life into hell*. It becomes the very power of sin.

These four are thus the negative *objects* of repentance. They are the obstacles to be removed. But God alone can remove them. Hence, the first part of the Prayer of St. Ephrem contains this cry from the bottom of human helplessness.

We are called during the Great Fast to honestly assess if any of these four elements are in our lives. We don't do this in order to beat ourselves up, but rather to discover where we must start to work on changing our lives.

So, it is critical for us to look at our lives and ask: *Does slothfulness have any part in my life? Am I susceptible to discouragement or despondency? Does ambition play any part in my life? Do I engage in idle talk, which can be contained in gossip, prejudice, bigotry, or judgment of others?* These are behaviors that can kill my own soul and prevent spiritual growth.

Our Worship of God Through the Great Fast

In this article I have been considering the first two of the primary Liturgical Services characteristic of our observance of the Great Fast. The first, of course, is the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts. In truth it is a combination of Evening Prayer (i.e., Vespers) with a unique service for the distribution of presanctified - that is pre-consecrated gifts - (i.e., Holy Communion). The first part of the service is Vespers, which is taken in semi-darkness. This continues until we reach the half-way point when we sing the wonderful hymn: *O Gentle Light* and the worship area then is partially filled with light.

Who is the *Gentle Light*? Jesus Christ. Why is He called the *Gentle Light*? Because His teaching sheds light on how humans should live. His message is a message of *Love for our fellowmen* and *personal internal peace* which can be achieved when one attempts to live like Jesus. We also declare the Jesus, the *Gentle Light*, gives *life to the whole world*.

After we sing this hymn, we hear the readings for the week. During the entire Great Fast they are only Old Testament readings. During the Great and Holy Week we add readings from the Gospels.

During the first several weeks, the readings are taken from Genesis and Proverbs. The readings from Genesis truly speak about human life and the



struggle of humankind to come to a real understanding of life.

The second readings are taken from, during the first few weeks, from Proverbs which are the short popular says of King Solomon of Israel that expres some commonplace truth or useful thought. He wrote them to teach his people how to live - how to act in every circumstance, for he wanted them to be understanding, just and fair in everything they did. He said, "I want to make the simple-minded wise! I want thse already wise to become the wiser and become leaders by exploring the depths of meaning in these nuggets of truth."

How does a man become wise? The first step is to trust and reverence the Lord! Only fools refuse to be taught.

Proverbs in many instances convey a common sense approach to life. You have to listen closely to them to gain an understanding of their meaning.

Come and hear for yourself!



St. Michael's Parish News

A Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Dearborn Michigan

PARISH EVENTS

LENTEN SOUP LUNCH

Sunday, March 4th



It has become one of our parish traditions to gather, on the Third Sunday of the Great Fast, to share a lunch of meatless soups. We will be calling for people who might like to make a soup for this event. If you volunteer to make a soup, we would also ask you to provide a copy of the recipe.

ADULT DISCUSSION SESSIONS

Second Session: Today, February 25th

We will meet during the Coffee Hour to discuss the First Article. I will also distribute the Second Article

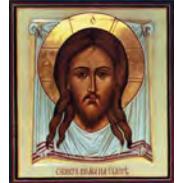
PARISH CLEAN-UP DAY

Would like to schedule before Great and Holy Week, a church clean-up day. Candles need to be washed and clutter needs to be dealt with in the kitchen and other places.

No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.

CALLED TO HOLINESS

In this article I have been attempting to come to some understanding of *holiness*, because I believe that we are all called to holiness. I've shared a number of different ideas already. In Biblical tradition in both the Old and the New Testament, holiness is by no means a moral concept. Rather it connotes a characteristic feature of deity. Therefore in modern theological terms, it has a dogmatic and not an ethical dimension. As a matter of fact, as an attribute it can also be associated with God's *holy people*, which in the New Testament is clearly identified with the Church. In other words, it is not an exaggeration to state that it constitutes an *ecclesial* rather than a *personal* process, having a *collective* and not merely an *individual* character.



Even in later Christian tradition, when - as the result of the encounter with Greek philosophy - a more personal understanding of holiness has gradually developed, it was always within this ecclesial framework that the concept of *holiness* of any individual believer has been understood. It is this ecclesial dimension

(Continued on page 8)

A Prayer-A-Day For the Great Fast

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 25th

Almighty God, as I end this second week of the Fast, I again ask Your help. Help me see how I must change to become more like Jesus. Help me not to linger on my weaknesses but, rather, to use my strengths to make the changes You help me to identify. Help me not to fear change but to embrace it, knowing that as I make these changes I become more like the person You intended when You created me. Help me not to get discouraged but, rather, to grant me the spirit of humility and the spirit of patience and neighborly love. Help me to apply myself to spiritual growth, knowing that this is the purpose of life. I ask this of You, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 26th

Heavenly Father, help me to use this time of the Fast to gain a deeper understanding of this life that You share with me. As I reflect on the mystery of life, I realize that You created me in Your image and infused into me the ability to grow in the likeness of Jesus. I know this because I sense that I share, albeit in a more limited way, Your powers to love, create, reason and the free will to choose. These powers, indeed, are wonderful. Help me to use them wisely and freely choose to grow in the likeness of Jesus. I desire this because I know that this is the purpose of this life. I ask this of You Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 27th

Heavenly Father, help me to embrace You as the Master of my life. Help me to desire to become a person who desires to imitate Jesus and love my neighbors as myself. Help me to put aside any inclination to judge others or to be prejudiced. I find that it is so easy to get distracted from the true purpose of my life - to grow in my likeness of Jesus. Help me, Father, to grow in my determination to truly model my life after Him. Strengthen my resolve, Father, to embrace the Jesus way of living. Help me to be honest in my relationships with others and to take responsibility for my reactions to others and my feelings. I ask this of You, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. AMEN

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 28th

Almighty God, as I continue to prepare myself to celebrate Pascha, I ask You to grant me the strength and courage to continue my efforts, whatever they may be. Help me to embrace the present moment, knowing that it is only in the present moment that I can come to know You, the source of my life, and return Your love. Help me to forget the things of the past or become preoccupied with the future. Help me to stand at this present moment in Your presence and offer You praise and worship. Help me to sense Your presence in my life and in the lives of all other humans. I humbly ask this of You, Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit now and ever and forever. AMEN

A Prayer-A-Day For the Great Fast

THURSDAY, MARCH 1st

Heavenly Father, the time is rapidly passing before the Church will call me to think and pray about the sacrifice that Your Son Jesus made for me and humankind. I beg Your help in maintaining my efforts to prepare myself for the celebration of the Lord's crucifixion and resurrection. Help me to continue my efforts to model my life after His. I thank You, Father, for all You have revealed to me about life through Your Son. I know that You have given me this out of Your love for me and because You desire that I spiritually grow and become ever more the person You created me to be. I humbly ask this of You, Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit now and ever and forever. AMEN

FRIDAY, MARCH 2nd

O Heavenly Father, I thank You for helping me reach this point in the Fast. I know that after today I am called to focus my attention on the Life-giving Cross of Your Son. At this point in the Fast, I would honor You by addressing my prayers to Your Son and my Lord so that I might join Him in offering my life to You. I would do this so that I might learn from Him how to truly honor You. I desire to join myself to Him during these remaining days of the Fast, asking You to help me dedicate myself to doing Your will as He did. I humbly ask this of You, Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit now and ever and forever. AMEN

SATURDAY, MARCH 3rd

O Christ our God, of Your own will You accepted Crucifixion that I might be restored to life. Taking the quill of the Cross, out of love for me, You signed my absolution with bloody fingers in the red ink of royalty. I realize that without Your help I am in danger of being parted from You. Forsake me not! Grant me Your help! Take pity on me for You alone are longsuffering! Rise up and fight against my enemies in Your almighty power. I pledge to embrace, with Your help, my own cross, which is symbolic of the challenges of life. Help me, like You, to endure life's struggles without forsaking belief in God. I make this prayer to You, together with Your Heavenly Father and Holy Spirit. AMEN.

SUNDAY, MARCH 4th

In Paradise the tree stripped me bare, for by giving me its fruit, Death embrace human life. Now the Tree of the Cross clothes me with the garment of life, filling the world with boundless joy. Beholding it venerated, O my soul, let me raise my voice in faith and pray: I bow to Your Cross, O Master, and I praise Your Holy Resurrection. Help me, O my Savior, to mean these words with my whole being. Help me to understand the message that the Cross has for me. Help me to live like You Who embraced this Cross, by meeting the challenges of life as nobly as You did. I humbly ask this of You, Who I call Father, Son and Holy Spirit now and ever and forever. AMEN

St. Michael the Archangel
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Pastor

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LITURGY SCHEDULE

Sundays @ 10:00 AM
Ukrainian & English

Weekdays @ 8:00 AM
English

SACRAMENTS

Penance
By Appointment

Baptism & Matrimony
*In most instances membership
required for six months*

Funerals
*Membership of an immediate
family member required*

Parish Life Council

Bob & Corinne Boyko
734.451.1893

John & Janet Dicky
313.563.5509

Daria Drobny
313.791-0292

Robert Krokosky
248.431.9554

Leo & Mary LaDouceur
313.278.7378

Gordon Malaniak
734.564.9817

Leonard Mier
313.584-6795

Greg & Ester Petrovich
734.453-4354

Rafic Vawter
313.624.9867

Schedule of Services

Sunday, February 18 - First Weekend of the Great Fast - Tone 4
10:00 AM + Rosemary Katynski; Greg & Ester Petrovich

SECOND WEEK OF THE GREAT FAST - TONE 5

Monday, February 19 - Archippus, Apostle
No Service Scheduled

Tuesday, February 20 - Leo of Catania, Bishop
No Service Scheduled

Wednesday, February 21 - Timothy, Venerable
No Service Scheduled

Thursday, February 22 - Finding Relics of Eugenia Martyrs
No Service Scheduled

Friday, February 23 - Polycarp, Bishop-Martyr
7:00 PM - Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts

Saturday February 24 - 1st & 2nd Finding of St. John's Head
No Service Scheduled

Sunday February 25 - Second Weekend of the Great Fast - Tone 5
10:00 AM + Mary Jane Pipta

(Continued from page 5 - Call to Holiness)

of holiness that I have stressed. More precisely, I would now like to approach our understanding of holiness from the perspective of *eucharistic theology*, which I have hinted at in another article.

In almost all handbooks of Christian spirituality, eucharistic spirituality is closely connected with monastic spirituality. Most of our church's liturgical life and expressions have been heavily influenced by monastic spirituality. Many have seen this in the typical length of our services and other traditions connected to our periods of preparation for major feasts (i.e., the Great Fast and the St. Philip's Fast). I believe, however, that this can be adapted to our modern life style. ***More to come!***



<http://www.stmichaelarchangel.org>
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Learning our Faith from the Greek Fathers of the Church

I would continue with Cyril's argument against Nestorius about how the two natures in Christ are united. Nestorius used the word conjoined. Cyril challenged the use of this word since he thought that I did not accurately express the union of divinity and humanity that we say Jesus possessed. Cyril believed that using this word to express this mystery suggests that Jesus had two different personalities, divine and human. For Cyril this suggests idolatry. For if the man Jesus is not God, but merely joined to God in a conjunction or some-kind-of association, how can we genuinely speak of Him as divine? To us Cyril's own words, is the mere conjunction of David's descendant with the Word of God sufficient "to allow him to grasp the proper glory of God and rise above the bounds of the created order?... Does this not make Him an object of worship even though He is not God?"

Cyril understands Nestorius to argue that in the economy of the incarnation the Son assumes or conjoins His person to a man (Jesus of

Nazareth) and subsequently raises that man to the glory of the Godhead. Such a construction, Cyril believes, turns the incarnation on its head. Rather than the elevation of the man through assumption or conjunction, the incarnation is actually the union of the Son with human nature itself.

What of the biblical testimony concerning the incarnation, Cyril asks? Cyril feels that his exposition of the scriptures tells a very different story.

Cyril wonders why his opponents cannot clearly perceive the implications of their position, for if in the incarnation the Son has only *assumed* a man or *conjoined* himself to a man, is not the Son actually despising the economy by refusing to enter fully into the human condition? If it

was true, Cyril argues, he assumed a man, brought him to the trial of death, raised him to the heavens and made him sit alongside the Father, then where would the Only-Begotten position his own throne after this? This would seem to lead to the conclusion that God has two Sons, the Only-Begotten and the assumed.



CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA

The Courage to Pray

So how do we begin to pray. We can begin simply. When we read the scriptures honestly we can admit that certain passages mean little to us. We are ready to agree with God because we have no reason to disagree with him. We can approve of this or that commandment or divine action because it does not touch us personally., we do not yet see the demands it makes on us personally. Other passages repel us. If we had the courage we would say “no” to the Lord. We should note these passages carefully. They are a measure of the distance between God and us and also, perhaps more importantly for they are a measure of the distance between ourselves as we are now and our potential definitive selves. For the gospel is not a succession of external commandments. It is a whole gallery of internal portraits. Every time we say “no” to the Gospel we are refusing to be a person in the full sense of the word.

I have found that in our present society, the most difficult words in the Gospel seem to be: *love your enemies as yourself!* Why? Because our whole society seems to be focused on “them” and “us.” We are encouraged to “hate” those who want to “kill” us or others. Terrorism has spawned a whole lot of hate in many. Hatred for others is in direct contradiction to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But, if you listen closely to the discourse in our country, hatred is not directly only to terrorists. It seems to be directed at anyone who doesn't think like us, have the same values as us, or is not like.

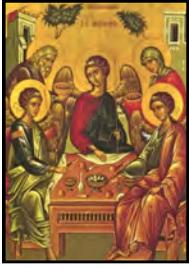
I have learned during these years of ministry that if I even hate one other person I lessen my ability to love and be loved. Our feelings about others, if not guided by the Gospel, have greater impact on us than they do on others. We can



receive only that which can give. I find little awareness of this basic philosophical principle in our modern world. Hatred spawns hatred and lives are diminished. Nowhere in the Gospel does Jesus respond to hatred directed at Him with hatred. He, because He is the Father's revelation to humankind on how to live, modeled for us how to live.

Think about this. When we return hatred with hatred we destroy our ability to pray. If I am filled with negative feelings and thoughts, I cannot offer praise to God.

Think about this!



THE EASTERN HERALD

СХІДНЬЙ ВІСНИК

The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, Ph.D.
Vol. 64 No 8 Second Weekend Of the Great Fast February 24-25, 2018

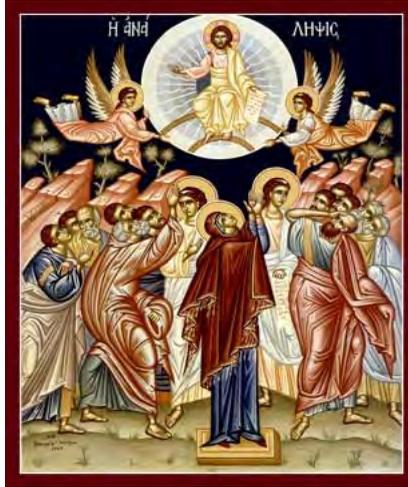
The Spirituality of the Christian East

As I have shared, the first two characteristics of Eastern spirituality are (1) Trinitarian and (2) Incarnational. I truly believe that the third characteristic is

EUCCHARISTIC.

The Eucharist is our means of entering into the joy of the Lord and to experience His very presence among us. He told His disciples that He would be with them always. He found a way to make this possible by giving us the Holy Eucharist which is contained in the transformed essence of the gifts of bread and wine. He simply stated, as He offered His disciples both bread and wine: *this is my Body and this is my Blood*. He told them, and us, that He would be ever present to us if we believe that when we repeat His actions during the Last Supper that He is in our presence.

Our Eastern spirituality believes that when we pray to the Father, remember the words and actions of



Life's Journey is an Ascension to the Heavenly Father

the Son, Jesus, and invoke the Holy Spirit that somehow in a mystical and truly miraculous way Jesus is present to us. Of course this makes no sense without faith. This is not something that we can prove. It is truly something we can believe!

It is important to point out that this mystery truly becomes reality only within the

context of a *community* that believe that God became a human being in order to model for us how to live. The Eucharist creatively symbolizes that Jesus is present when there is true *unity* among humans. Bread and wine are produced only when many grains of wheat and bunches of grapes are crushed together to make bread and wine. They cannot be produced without this *unity* of grains of wheat and grapes. They must become one. So Christ is present to us when we achieve **ONENESS IN UNITY!**

You are Forgiven and Healed

In Capernaum Jesus is surrounded by great numbers of people. As He preaches to the crowd, four friends of a paralyzed man lower him on his mat through the roof so that he can be close enough for Jesus to see him and cure him. Jesus responds to this act of faith, not by healing the man immediately, but by touching off the first of a series of controversial dialogues with the Scribes and Pharisees. When Jesus says, "Child, your sins are forgiven," He is as much as saying, "It is God whom you approach." In the Old Testament, only God is capable of forgiving sins; and it was expected that He would do so only at the end of time. It becomes clear why the Scribes murmur "he is blaspheming" and why Jesus brings it all out in the open. His claim to be able to forgive sins better reveals His identity as Son of God than do the miracles He performs.

Aware of the silent censure His forgiving word has caused in the crowd, Jesus proceeds to prove that "the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins on earth" by commanding the man to rise and walk in the sight of everyone. In concluding this miracle, Mark asks his readers to praise God for His presence in their midst as the forgiver-healer, just as the crowd did, even in the face of those who did not believe.

It is significant that Mark has chosen to present this miracle and teaching about Jesus' power to forgive sins so early in his Gospel drama. It shows that the need for the experience of God's forgiveness was as important to first-century Christians as it is today. Mark's readers praise God for saying clearly, and even today, "My sons, my daughters, I absolve you from your sins."