My Beloved Ones,

This week’s Gospel is a profound and moving example of how we are called to live in a spirit of love and joy.

We read that our Lord has come to Nazareth by boat, where He encounters a Paralytic. Jesus says, “Take heart my son, your sins are forgiven” (Matthew 9:2). Naturally, this causes a scandal, for among the crowd are Scribes, who think, “This man is blaspheming!” (Matthew 9:3) Of course, Christ knows the hardness of their hearts, and so He asks, “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” (Matthew 9:4-6) The Paralytic then rises and goes home, leaving the crowd astonished, as they “…glorified God, who had given such authority to men.” (Matthew 9:8) This Gospel asks us to seriously consider whether we are like those faithful, who love their friend and respect the Son of David’s ministry to save the weak and sinful; or are we to become like the Scribes whose judgments cloud their hearts?

In this week’s Epistle, St. Paul instructs the new Roman Church what makes a true Christian: “Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor… Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.” (Matthew 9:9-10; 14) Truly, though the Scribes of Nazareth had read God’s Law, it was not written on their hearts. How amazing must it have been to witness their paralyzed friend and neighbor take up his bed and walk—yet the Scribes were too blind to feel the genuine love which comes from God’s goodness.

Though we may not have seen a great miracle like a healing, how many times do we miss the small miracles around us every day? Do we take a moment to remove ourselves from the middle of our worries and troubles of our day to notice the sunset? Are we too angry or sad to share our friends and neighbors’ joy, when they accomplish something good? Let the Scribes’ reaction be a lesson that God desires us to “…love one another with mutual affection…” Like the Scribes, we are called to hold fast to God’s commandments, but like the people of Nazareth, we must do so in a way that allows us to feel God. God, of course, is love, and only when we genuinely feel love, can He move within our hearts, and then change us for the better.

+ALEXIOS
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