



# DIAKONIA

A National Ministry of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

REFLECTIONS FROM TODAY'S READING - *Mark 2:1-12*

## “Isn't this the son of the carpenter?”

Fr. George Parsenios



The Scribes we meet in today's Gospel reading regularly oppose Jesus, but they do not oppose merely *what* he teaches. They oppose *that* he teaches in the first place. Scribes were a learned class of experts in the Law of Moses, and they seem to be the same people whom the Gospel of Luke calls “lawyers” (Luke 11:46). The Wisdom of Ben Sira explains that a scribe must be so devoted to study and learning that he must never engage in the work of a tradesman (*tekton*), because a tradesman (*tekton*) is busy doing all of the practical things that a city needs to thrive (38:24-33). This is the problem the scribes have with Jesus. Jesus is a tradesman. He is called a carpenter (*tekton*) and the son of a carpenter (Mark 6:3). The Scribes cannot accept that God has taken flesh in the form of a humble tradesman, as opposed to a learned expert in the Law of Moses. They

remain fixed in old patterns of thought and belief, while Jesus has inaugurated a new age of revelation of God's grace, and the old is incompatible with the new. When Jesus says that new wine cannot be put into old wineskins (Mark 2:22), he means that our relationship to God must be completely reevaluated with the coming of Christ. The season of Great Lent reminds us that today we, too, must evaluate where we ourselves are caught in ways of thinking or living that are incompatible with our Christian lives. Like the Scribes, we may have false expectations about who God is and how he works in the world, and these expectations might lead us to oppose what is good and holy and true.

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*L100*

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## FROM THE ORIGINAL GREEK: *Nostalgia* (Νοστιάγια) What is “Nostalgia?”

Fr. George Parsenios



The noun “nostalgia” is not originally a Greek word, but it is a modern compound of two very important ancient Greek words common in Homeric poetry. The word *νόστος/nostos* means “return” or “journey home,” and it is especially prominent in

the *Odyssey* of Homer, where it describes the perpetual attempts of Odysseus

to return home to the island of Ithaca. Later Greek authors refer to the many efforts, often ill-fated, of

Greek heroes to return home from Troy as “*nostoi*.” The term *ἄλγος* is also common in Greek literature from Homer onwards, and it means “pain” or “suffering.” In modern pharmaceutical language, for example, an analgesic is a painkiller, since it leaves one *an-algos*, or “without *algos*, unpained.” These two words, *nostos* and *algos*, were combined in the early modern era by a Swiss doctor to describe the pain that he saw in young soldiers who traveled too long and too far from their homeland. These soldiers suffered from a desire to return home (*nostos*) that they experienced as psychic pain (*algos*), which he called “nostalgia.”

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### THIS WEEK’S LOOK AT CHURCH HISTORY

## The Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral of Atlanta



Greek Orthodox Church of Atlanta,  
Garnett Street and Central Avenue from 1906 – 1928  
With permission from Annunciation Cathedral.

Greek immigrants began arriving in Atlanta in the late 1800s, bringing a deep devotion to their Orthodox faith and heritage. Desiring a place to worship and preserve their traditions, they organized the “Evangelismos” Society, officially founding the Annunciation community on September 5, 1905.

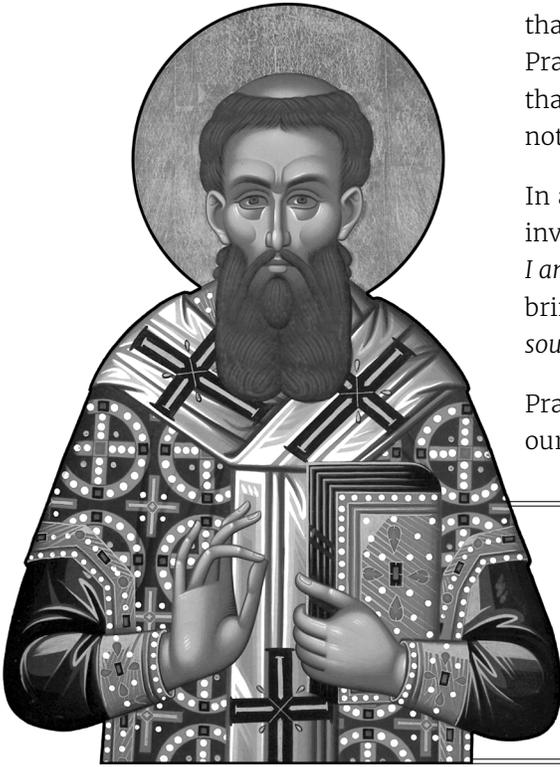
The first services were held in a rented hall at 113<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> Whitehall Street, soon replaced in 1906 by a former Presbyterian church at Garnett Street and Central Avenue, which also housed a Greek school and served as a center of community life. As the parish grew, it became a hub for new cultural and philanthropic societies, strengthening Greek Orthodox identity in Atlanta.

In 1928, the community purchased and renovated a former Jewish synagogue at Pryor and Richardson Streets, transforming it into a Byzantine-style church that served the faithful for nearly four decades. Continued growth led to a bold new vision, culminating in the construction of the present Cathedral and Educational Center on Clairmont Road, dedicated in 1970—a spiritual home that reflects the enduring faith and heritage of Atlanta’s Greek Orthodox community.

## SUNDAY OF SAINT GREGORY PALAMAS

# The Power of Prayer

Eva Konstantakos



The second Sunday of Great Lent honors **St. Gregory Palamas**, who taught that through prayer and God’s grace, we can truly experience His presence. Prayer is not just words—it is communion with God, a living relationship that transforms the soul. St. Gregory reminds us that the light of Christ is not distant; it shines in the hearts of those who seek Him sincerely.

In a noisy, fast-paced world, silence and prayer are revolutionary acts. Lent invites us to slow down and listen. As Scripture says, *“Be still, and know that I am God”* (Psalm 46:10, RSV). Even short prayers, offered with humility, can bring peace and clarity. St. John Chrysostom wrote, *“Prayer is the light of the soul, giving us true knowledge of God.”*

Prayer is not about perfection—it’s about presence. When we pray, we open our hearts to God’s grace, allowing His light to heal and guide us.

### Personal Challenge:

Commit to five minutes (or adding five minutes) of stillness and quiet prayer each day this week. Turn off distractions, breathe deeply, and simply say, “Lord, have mercy.” Let this simple act become a doorway to peace and communion with God.



### Fasting To Love

**Rev. Dr. Athanasios “Fr. Al” Demos**

During Lent we hear so many references to the subject of fasting. Too often we focus only on food to the point where one might become somewhat Pharisaic. In our focus on food, we often forget that the true fast is from sin—from words, thoughts and deeds that are not conducive to a Christ-centered life. Certainly, fasting aids in our spiritual growth, as well as our health. And even more, fasting from sin enhances our spiritual growth. We find we have a lighter, clearer mind. We are more alert and aware, and have a lighter, freer feeling in knowing that we are growing in our struggle to follow in the way of our Lord. We also become more aware of our unworthiness before God and wonder at God’s magnanimous love that He pours out upon us. We begin to understand how infinitely magnificent is this wondrous God Whom we worship, love and adore. Our fasting is an expression of our love for Him and a challenge to ourselves to enhance that love every day of our life.

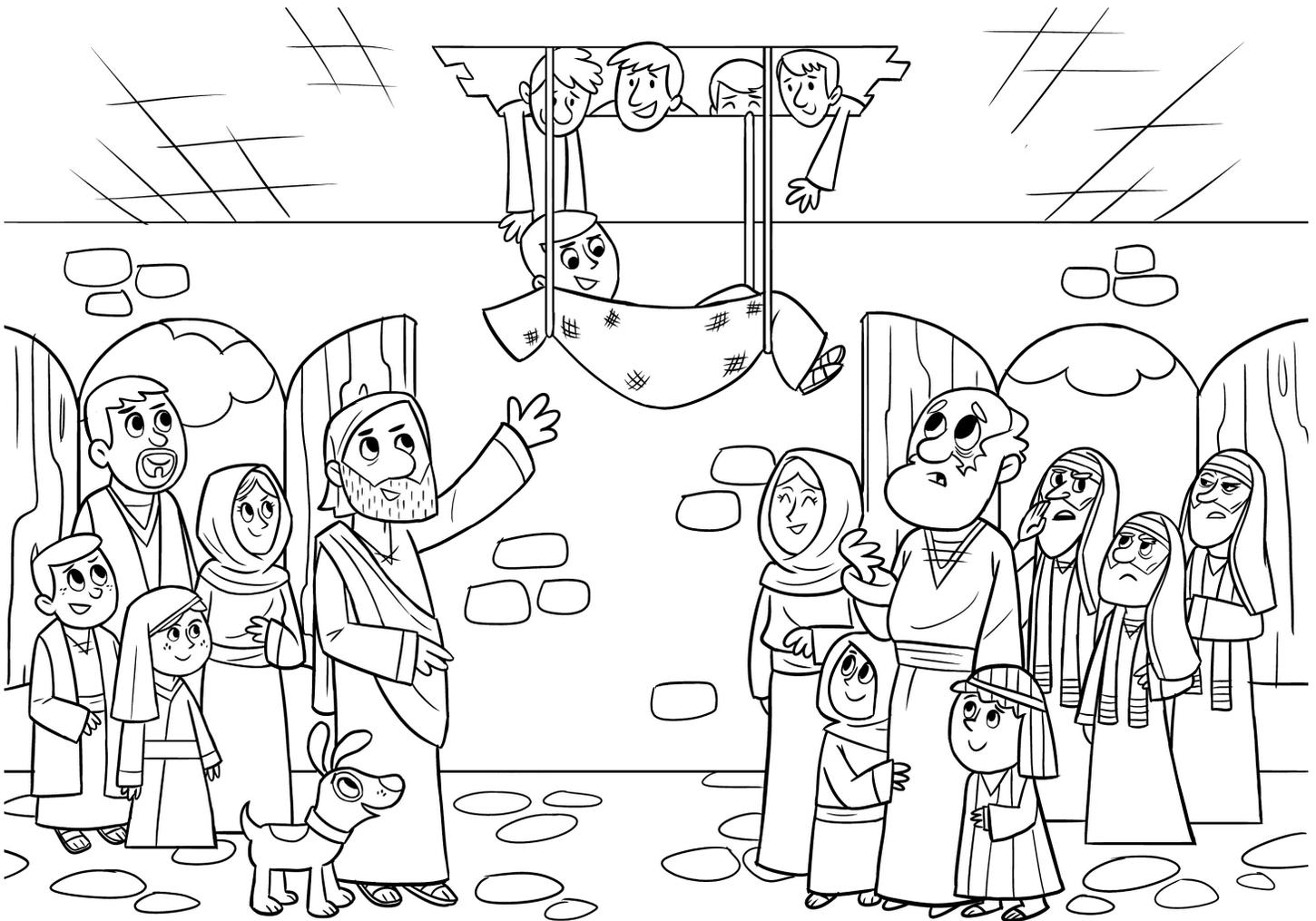


**Just For Kids!**  
 (...and the young at heart)

**In the Gospel of Mark (2:1-12)**

In today's Gospel story, we hear about four friends. They heard that Jesus was inside a house, teaching and helping people. They had a friend who could not walk, so they put him on a stretcher and carried him to Jesus so He could make him well. When they reached the house, it was completely full of people. They couldn't even get through the door! But they didn't give up. Instead, they climbed up to the roof, made an opening, and gently lowered their friend and laid him at the feet of Jesus. These friends teach us something important. We should bring ourselves to Jesus, and we should help bring other people to Him too. The greatest gift we can give anyone is helping them to know Jesus.

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