

He is bidden not only to take up his bed, but also to return to his house; that is, he is told to return to Paradise; for that is man's true home and the first to receive him: last, not by law, but by fraud. Rightly therefore is his home restored to him; since he has come Who destroyed the deed of fraud, and restored his right.

*And immediately rising up before them he took up the bed on which he lay; and he went away to his own house, glorifying God.*



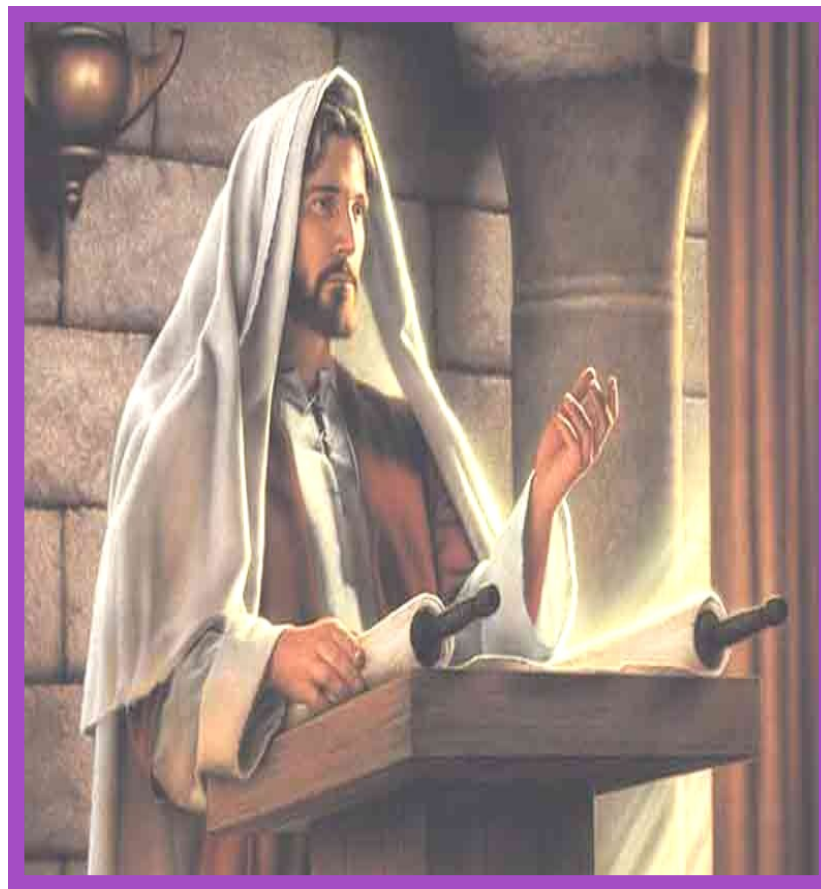
There is no delay in his return to health: one is the moment of speaking and healing. Unbelieving they see him rise up; astonished they see him on his way. They are disposed to fear rather than believe the wonders of divine mercy. Had they believed, they would not have feared but loved: for perfect love casts out fear (1 Jn. iv. 18). And so these men, since they did not love, began to speak evil. Jesus says: *Why do you think evil in your*

*hearts?* Who says this? The High priest. He saw the leprosy in the hearts of the Jews, and shows them they are worse than lepers. The leper he made clean. He bids show himself to the priest, and offer a gift (Mt. viii. 4). The priest turns lepers away; so that they shall not contaminate others with their leprosy.



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**SERMON ON  
THE HEALING OF THE PARALYTIC  
FROM THE FATHER'S OF THE CHURCH  
# 114 - 1**



**JESUS, OUR FIRST PREACHER!**

**18<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**

## Based on the Divine Office-Douay-Rheims Version

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Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew 9: 1-8

by: Saint Ambrose, Bishop and Doctor

*And, behold, men brought in a bed a man who had the palsy; and they sought means to bring him in and to lay him before him. And when they could not, they let him down through the tiles before Jesus.*

The healing of this paralytic was not a casual happening; neither was it a simple healing, since the Lord prepares for it by prayer (v. 16); not indeed to obtain help, but as an example to us: He was giving us a pattern to imitate; for He had no need to pray. Here therefore, with the doctors of the law coming from all Galilee, from Judea and from Jerusalem, we have described for us, among the cures of other persons, the healing of this paralytic.

But first of all let us say again what we have said before; That anyone who is sick should seek the help on prayer of others, that they may be restored to health; that through their intercession, the enfeebled frame of our body, the wavering footsteps of our deeds, may be restored to health by the remedy of the heavenly word. Let there therefore be certain helpers of the soul (monitors), to raise the soul of man, even lying indifferent in the weakness of the outer body, so that by their assistance it may be easy for a man to raise himself and lower himself again, to be placed in the sight of Jesus; worthy to appear in the Lord's sight. For the Lord look's with affection on the humble: Because he hath regard the humility of his handmaid (Lk. i:48).

*Whose faith when he saw, he said: Man, thy sins are forgiven thee.*

Great is the Lord, Who pardons some because of the merits of others; and while subjecting some to trials, He forgives others their sins. Why should not the prayer of your fellow-man avail with you, when a servant had both the merit of pleading for another before God and the privilege of obtaining what he prayed for? Learn you who judge, to forgive. Learn you who are sick, to gain health through prayer. Should you be different because of your grave sins, seek the prayers of others, call upon the Church to pray for you, and in His regard for her, the Lord will give what he could refuse to you.

And though we must not withhold faith from this account, in that we truly believe that the body of this paralytic was healed, take note nevertheless of the healing of the interior man, whose sins were forgiven,

which fact, since the Jews assert only God can forgive, proclaims that He is truly God, while at the same time they, by asserting this, proclaim their own falseness. That they may praise the greatness of the work (i.e., to forgive sin), they deny His true greatness. And so, seeking no word of faith from them, the Son of God receives testimony both from them and from His works.

Unfaith cannot confess, cannot believe. So while testimony is not wanting to His Divinity, faith is wanting for their salvation. For the more strongly do they confess Him who confess Him unwillingly, and the greater their guilt in denying what is proved by their own assertions. Great truly is the madness of this faithless people: That confessing God alone can forgive sin, they refuse to believe God as He forgives sins. But the Lord, wishing to save sinners, and to show that He is God, both by His knowledge of things hidden and by the wonders of His works, goes on to say:

*Which is easier to say: Thy sins are forgiven thee; or to say: Arise and walk?*

In this place He gives a complete likeness of the resurrection. Healing wounds of mind and body. He forgives the sins of souls and makes an end of the infirmity of the flesh: This is to cure the whole man. And though it is a great thing to forgive men their sins (for who can forgive sins but God alone, Who also forgives them through those to whom He has given the power of forgiving sin?) nevertheless, it is a much more divine work to give resurrection to their bodies; because the Lord is Himself the Resurrection.

*But, that you may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (he saith to the sick of the palsy), I say to thee: Arise, take up thy bed and go into thy house.*

This bed he is told to take up, what does it mean but that he is told to raise up the human body? This is the bed that David washed each night as we read: *I will wash my bed: I will water my couch with my tears* (Ps. vi. 7). This is the bed of pain upon which our soul lies sick in the grievous torment of a burdened conscience. But if anyone bear this bed according to the commandments of Christ, it is no longer a bed of pain, but of rest. Because what was death, begins now to be rest; by the mercy of the Lord Who has changed our sleep of death into the grace of the delight of the Lord.