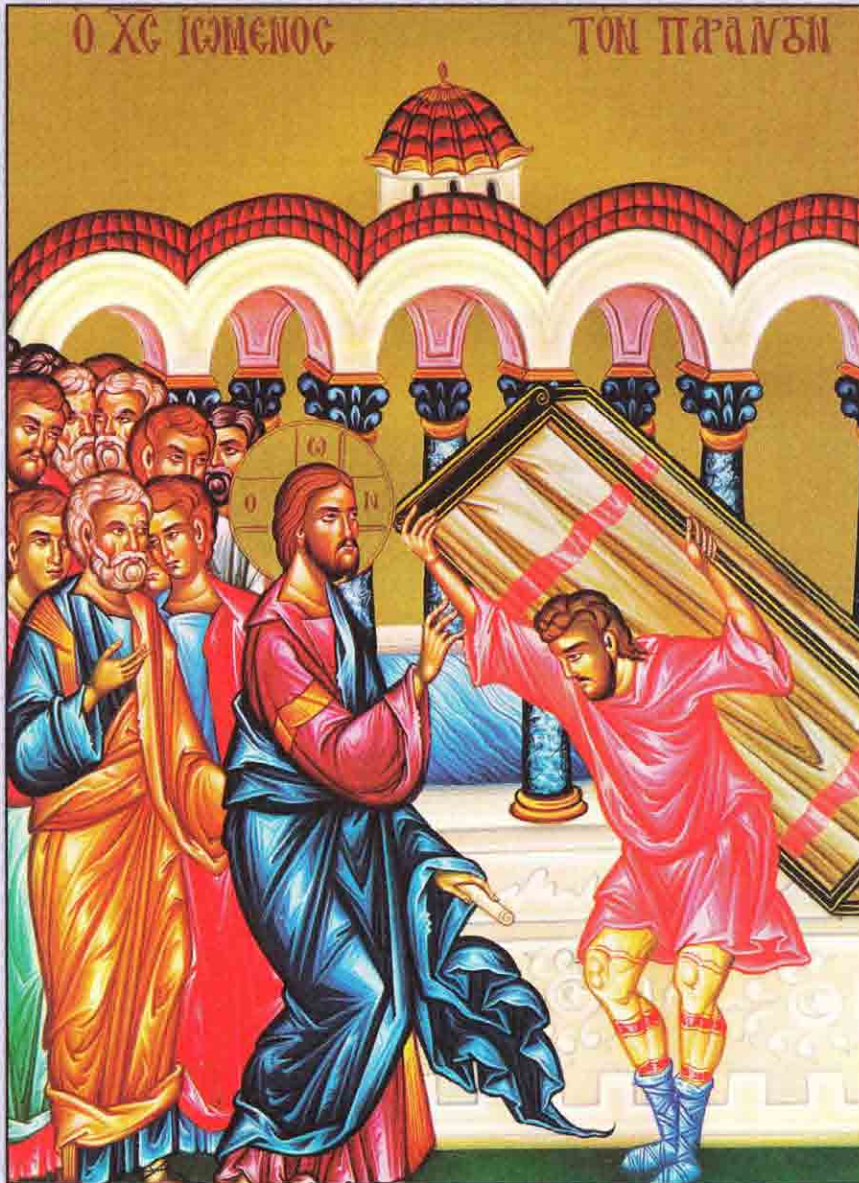


SUNDAY OF THE PARALYTIC MAN



*Icon of Jesus Healing the Paralytic Man*



## THE NETWORKS OF COMMUNICATION

*Adapted from the OCA Mission Resource Kit*

The single most comprehensive, contemporary lesson in Church growth (specifically, how to evangelize effectively in your parish) can be learned by standing in any Byzantine Christian church on the first Sunday of Great Lent (Great Lent being a traditional time for the catechumenate) and listening to the Gospel reading (John 1:35ff.). A paraphrase of the events in this passage is as follows:

- ❖ Jesus told Andrew, “Come and see,” and they did.
- ❖ Because it was important, Andrew went and found his brother Simon Peter and brought him to Jesus.
- ❖ Jesus told Philip, “Follow me,” and he did.
- ❖ Because it was important, Philip went and found his friend Nathanael and told him, and Nathanael came to Jesus.

Anyone who can fully grasp the implications of points 2 and 4, and is willing to apply them actively, is on the way to successful evangelism in their local parish. The following statistics on recruited membership are generally accepted by Church analysts in North America. Typically, members of any parish have joined their church because of:

- ❖ Visitations (by priest or parishioner) 1-2 %
- ❖ Walked in off the street 2- 3 %
- ❖ Special need met by parish 2-3 %
- ❖ Program offered by parish 3-4 %
- ❖ Sunday School 3-5 %
- ❖ Clergy 3-5%
- ❖ “Crusade” .001 %
- ❖ A relative or friend 70-90 %

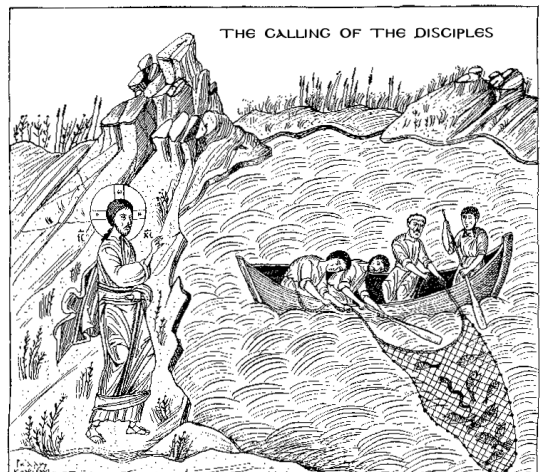
Chances are very great that if you are reading this, you are a baptized Christian because a relative or a friend brought you to the Church. (It would be strange to expect anything else.) Further analysis of the 70-90 % in the last category is illuminating: If a majority of the people were brought by relatives, then the parish is more static; if they were brought by friends, then the parish is more dynamic.

A principle related to the family-friends phenomenon illustrated above is found in the New Testament emphasis on evangelism through house-holds. The calling of Zacchaeus and the bringing of salvation

to him and to all his house is (not coincidentally) the Gospel reading that alerts us to preparation for Great Lent, the time of the catechumenate, as mentioned above. Similarly, we note the same paradigm in Acts when Paul evangelizes Lydia and her house, the jailer and his house, and the leader of the synagogue and his house, to mention a few. Our Church normally appoints the Zacchaeus passage for the prayer and blessing of a new house, recognizing the principle of the natural growth of the Church through the family and the associations of the household.

Throughout the New Testament, it is assumed that the primary mode of Church growth is evangelism. Sometimes individuals from native Eastern Christian cultures lose sight of this reality because of their native situation. There are only three means whereby people become members of parishes: birth, transfer, and evangelism. Christian parenting cannot be expected to be the process by which the entire world becomes Christian. Likewise, transfer of membership to a “new” parish means that an “old” parish has lost a member, so the process is a “wash.”

The icon or image that we are given to imitate is that of evangelism, the draught of fishes, the making of disciples. Individuals who hear the Gospel are expected to proclaim the Gospel.





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*The Cure of Baptism Foreshadowed*

What manner of cure is this? What mystery does it signify to us? For these things are not written carelessly, or without a purpose, but as a figure and type they show in outline things to come, in order that what was exceedingly strange might not, by coming unexpectedly, do harm among the many the power of faith. What then is it that they show in outline? A Baptism was about to be given, possessing much power, and the greatest of gifts, a Baptism purging all sins and making men alive instead of dead. These things then are foreshown as in a picture by the pool, and by many other circumstances. And first is given a water which purges the stains of our bodies, and those defilements which are not, but seem to be, as those from touching the dead, those from leprosy, and other similar causes; under the old covenant one may see many things done by water

on this account. However, let us now proceed to the matter in hand.

First then, as I before said, He causes defilements of our bodies, and afterwards infirmities of different kinds, to be done away by water. Because God, desiring to bring us nearer to faith in Baptism, no longer heals defilements only, but diseases also. For those figures which came nearer [in time] to the reality, both as regarded Baptism, and the Passion, and the rest, were plainer than the more ancient. ... And this miracle was done in order that men, learning that it is possible by water to heal the diseases of the body, and being exercised in this for a long time, might more easily believe that it can also heal the diseases of the soul.

*St. John Chrysostom*