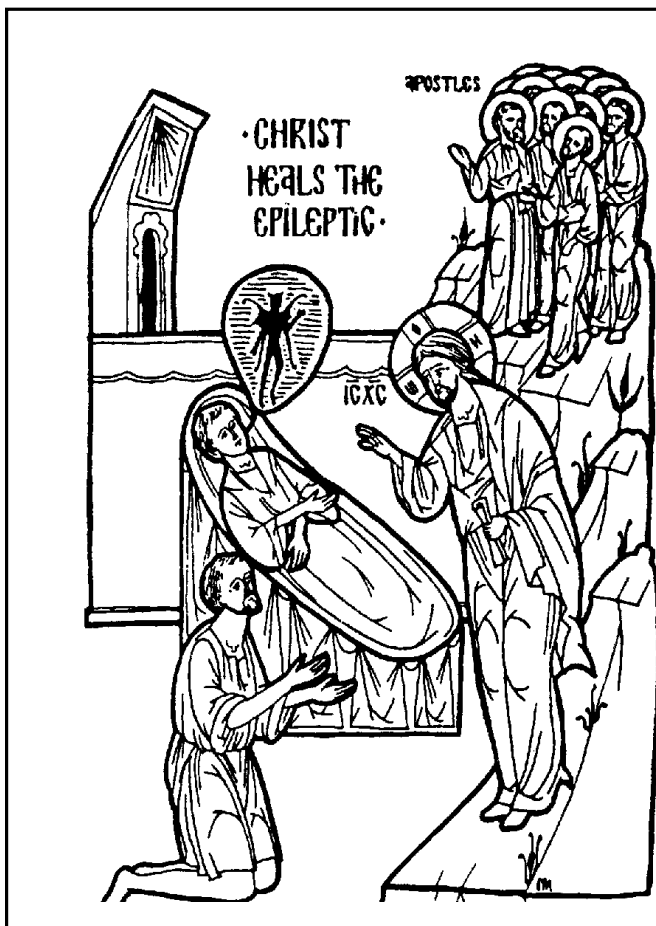


Fourth Sunday of Lent



Jesus Heals the Epileptic

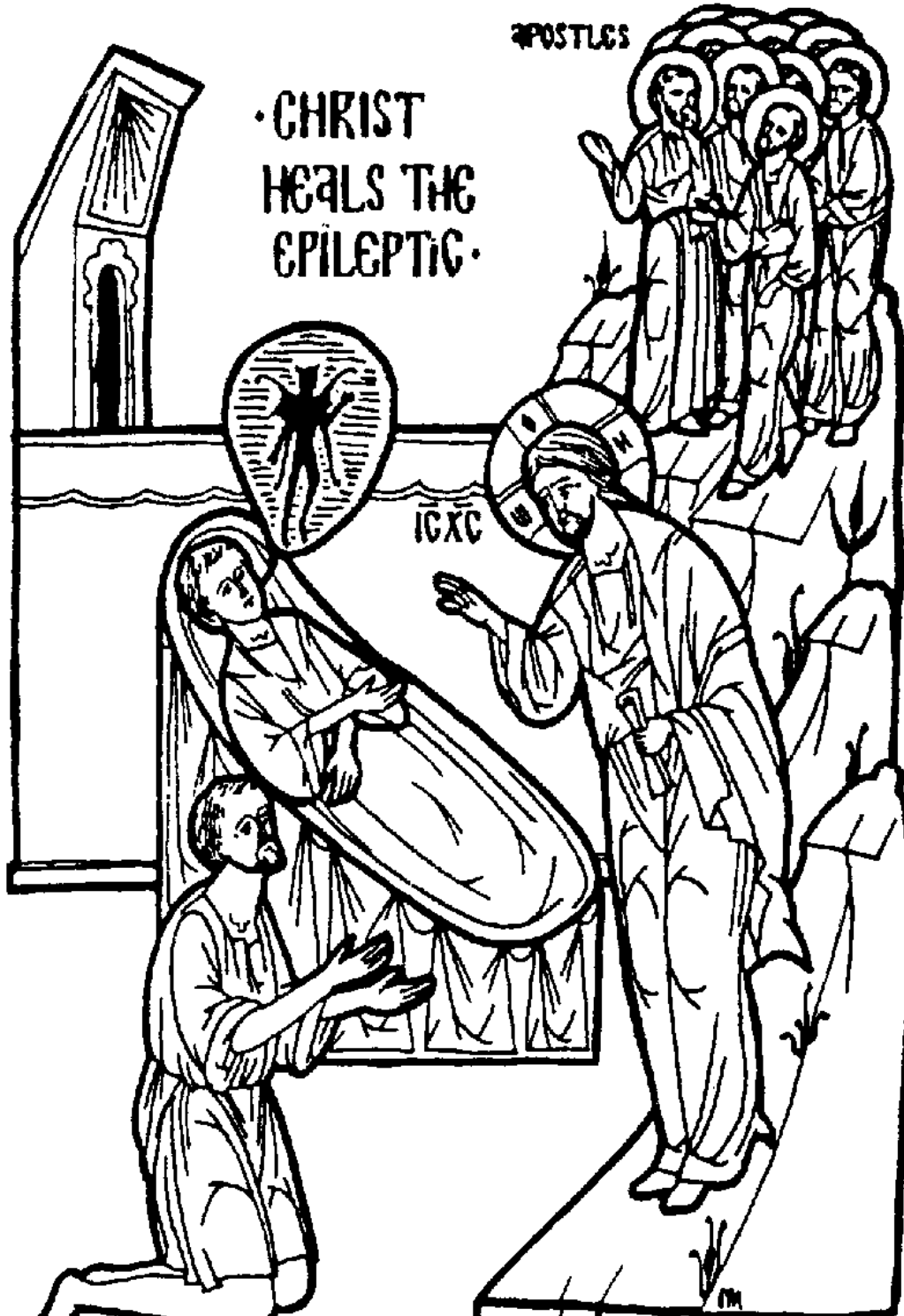
Mark 9:17-31

In today's Gospel reading we see a father coming to Jesus to ask for help to heal his son. The son had an evil spirit in him, which made him foam at the mouth and gnash his teeth. The evil spirit did horrible things like throwing the young man into the fire and into the water to try to destroy him. Jesus asks the father to believe and tells him that all things are possible to the person who believes. The father, with tears, says a beautiful thing: "I believe, help my unbelief!" Jesus told the evil spirit to leave the young man, and it did. But the young man was so still, he looked like he was dead. Immediately Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and the young man stood up. Later, the disciples asked Jesus privately why they could not cast out this evil spirit. Jesus told them that this kind of demon cannot be cast out without prayer and fasting. Later, Jesus told them that he would be killed and that he would rise on the third day, but they did not understand yet what He meant, and they were afraid to ask Him.

Saint John of the Ladder

St. John of the Ladder is a Saint whose feast is celebrated on the Fourth Sunday of Lent (also March 30.) He lived in the late 6th and early 7th centuries. He was tonsured a monk at the Monastery of St. Catherine at Mt. Sinai. Most of his life was spent completely by himself in continuous prayer at the place where, according to tradition, God had spoken to Moses by the burning bush and later had given to him the Law. During the last years of his life Saint John was the abbot of St. Catherine's Monastery, where he wrote his famous work "The Ladder of Divine Ascent", which caused him to be known as St. John "of the Ladder." In this book he teaches how we can become spiritually and morally perfect. Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount: "You must be perfect - just as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). This is a command not only for the apostles or for monks, but also for all Christians. How can we become perfect? Put simply it is to "live just as Jesus did" (1 John 2:6). Christian perfection is growth in love, holiness, and goodness - through Jesus Christ.





The man on his knees is the father of a boy who is very sick. He asks Jesus to heal his son. Jesus tells the man that he should have faith that God can do anything. The man says that he has a lot of faith, but he asks Jesus to help him to have more. Jesus heals the boy by taking out all the bad things that were making the boy sick. Jesus helped the boy get up and the boy was well.