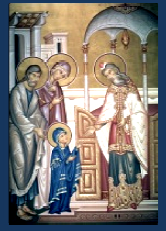


May 20, 2012

Sunday Sermon

Fr Ambrose Young
Entrance of the Theotokos Skete



The Sunday of the Blind Man, May 20, 2012

John 9:1-38

Christ is Risen!

In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Brothers and Sisters, we are now at the end of the Paschal season, for the great Feast of the Ascension is this coming Thursday. And here, on the last Sunday of this bright and joyful time of year, the Holy Fathers of the Church have appointed for us the Sunday of the Blind Man, so-called because of the Gospel that's read this morning.

Last Sunday we heard about the healing of the Paralytic by Christ and we saw how this applies to us, who are often paralyzed in our sins, in our laziness, in our inattentiveness to daily life, to spiritual life, and to God. Today we have another healing to examine—that of the Blind Man.

The Lord had been revealing to the Jews that He is equal to the Father by saying, “Before Abraham was, I AM.” This was blasphemy and heresy to those listeners, because the very words, “I AM” is the common English translation of what is called the “*tetragrammaton*”, the mysterious four letter Hebrew Name by which God revealed Himself to Moses on Mount Sinai. It could also be translated as, “I am the Existing One,” or “I am Being.” So when the Lord says, “Before Abraham lived, I AM,” He was clearly identifying Himself with the God of Moses, the God of the Old Testament, the God of the Hebrews.

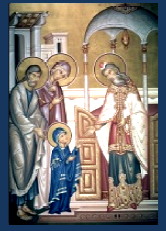
The scribes and Pharisees who were listening were furious and denounced Jesus, taking up stones to cast at Him. But suddenly the Lord left the Temple right through the midst of them, as though unseen, as though invisible, and no stone struck Him. As He left He came to a blind man and, in order to further confirm the truth of what He had just revealed to the Jews about being equal to God, and hoping to soften their hard hearts, He healed him of his blindness, saying “I must work the works of Him that sent Me...” And with this statement He revealed something further about God—that there is God the Father, and this Father has sent Him, Christ, His Son, to “do His works” here on earth.

And the Lord adds that He must “do” the works of the Father “while it is yet day; for the night comes, when no man can work.” In other words, while His life on earth lasted, Jesus worked for us and for our salvation. And further, He continues to labor for us, through the Holy Mysteries or Sacraments of the Church, by which He literally *gives* Himself to us, Body and Blood, and we receive His grace and strength. But He was also hinting that when this life, this world, had come to an end, there will be no more “work,” no more “doing”. The chances for working on ourselves will be at an end.

Then, taking some soil from the ground, the Savior formed clay eyes for the blind man, showing that He is the very One who also created the heavens and the earth and man himself. He sent the blind man to the pool of Siloam to wash the clay from his eyes and behold, the man could see! But even then, many of the witnesses still doubted that Christ had worked this miracle, so hard-hearted were they! They persisted in their disbelief. They questioned the man over and over, and even called his parents to interrogate them. And when finally faced with

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the facts they still did not soften their hearts, and they threw the formerly blind man out of the precincts of the city.

But Jesus found him and asked him if he believe in the Son of God. The blind man said: “Who is He, Lord, so that I might believe on Him?” And Jesus said unto him, ‘Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that speaketh with thee now.’ And he said, ‘Lord, I believe.’ And he worshipped Him.” What an encounter! What a narrative this is, and how important it is for us to see how this applies to us today. In last week’s Gospel we saw how we are spiritually paralyzed but that Christ wishes to raise us from our paralysis. In the same way, today we see how we are perhaps not physically blind, but *spiritually* blind, and the Lord wishes to heal us and restore our sight.

The great golden-tongued St. John Chrysostom, commenting on this Gospel almost 1500 years ago, tells us that this account should remind us that there is a future judgment coming for each and every one of us, and “the night of death...when no man can work...and there is no longer any salvation for those who did not obtain it in this life.” Therefore we must be quick to turn to the Lord, begging Him to heal us of our own spiritual blindness. “Now,” St. John continues, “*now* is the time for working, sowing, trading.” Not tomorrow, or the next day, or when we retire, but NOW. “Now,” he wrote, “let us sow diligently, with much labor and effort and sweat, so that later we may reap in rest and rejoicing, when the time comes for gathering instead of cultivating. What a man sows in this life, he will reap in the age to come. Let us sow spiritual seed in the soul; let us sow compassion, meekness, compunction, love, long-suffering, philanthropy, goodness, gentleness, forgiveness, peace, joy and holiness, *without which no one will see God.*”

“...*without which no one will see God...*” Here St. John ties everything together with the healing of the Blind Man, showing us how we absolutely critical it is that we must beseech healing from God of our own spiritual blindness, so that, in time, we will “see” Him with the very eyes of our souls, remembering the first of the Beatitudes: “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall SEE God.” He reminds us also that without light it is impossible to see anything, but that Christ Himself is Light, and the Light of the world, and the Light which enlightens every man that comes into the world.

When we are healed of our spiritual blindness, St. John Chrysostom concludes, the Lord “will conduct us into His heavenly bridal chamber, and will give us the enjoyment of His kingdom. May this be granted to all of us!”

In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen. Christ is risen!