



**Orthodox Church of the
Entrance of the Theotokos
into the Temple**

**306 W. Main Street
Emmitsburg, MD 21727**

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Two Types of Blindness
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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Christ is Risen! Indeed He is Risen!

There is no better image to begin this sermon with than that of our experience two years ago in the pandemic. How many people died before their time because they refused to believe the disease we call COVID was not real? There's no way of knowing, but they were to be sure in the hundreds of thousands. The disease became a subject of political conspiracy theories on the part of those who chose to remain ignorant of the truth. Those who could have prevented their disease proudly sided with the ignorant. Even later, those who could have taken the newly approved medicine to mitigate the effects of the disease wrongly believed that they would somehow be poisoned. I came down with COVID half a year ago and took the medicine to help me get over it. I am grateful that medical professionals using their God-given talents came up with it, for truly I was sick and needed to get better.

The miracle story we heard today from John's Gospel is about blindness, two kinds of blindness. First, there is the blindness of the man born blind. Jesus meets the man in the midst of a conversation, a teaching session, with His disciples who ask Him whose fault it was that the man was born blind. The Lord clearly dispels the mistaken notion that it was due to the specific sins of the man's family, and instead tells them that God will use the man's horrible condition to show the love, and mercy and creative power of His Son. Jesus mixes the clay of the earth with his saliva, anoints the man, tells him to go wash in the pool of Siloam, a small reservoir of water in the southern section of Old Jerusalem, which in Jesus' time was used for purification. The man obeys the Lord and is healed.

But the second blindness, the more profoundly disturbing blindness, was that of the legal rigorists of the time, the Pharisees and Scribes. They object to the miracle that has taken place, not because they did not believe it, but because they refused to accept the miracle at the hand of Jesus. It violated the law for Him to heal, to work on the Sabbath, and they could not see beyond that. Gone was their ability to feel compassion for the man born blind; gone was their ability to see beyond the letter of the law; gone was their understanding that the law was given for the benefit of man, not for its own sake. They would not, could not, see beyond the rules and regulations into the spirit of the Law, which is charity, sacrifice, care for the other. They could not and would not see it. They were in essence spiritually blind.

There is a sense in which we are all like those Pharisees. We profess Who Jesus Is, but we accept Him only on our own terms, if we accept Him at all. Most human beings simply go about their lives seeking what they think is best for them, for their groups, for their families, their politics. They push themselves ahead at the expense of anyone who stands in their way. Some give lip-service to the faith, but those who do so are becoming fewer and fewer as we speak. Most don't even bother, because they think only of getting ahead of others and securing a life of ease and security; whatever achieves that purpose they pursue with their very lives.

But the Lord's teaching is clear. We heard it so very clearly in Great Lent, but somehow forget it thereafter. The Lord said, "Those who would be my disciples must deny themselves, take up their cross and follow me." In other words, they must do for others as the Lord does for them. In other words, they must seek ways to serve rather than to be served. In other words, they must treat others as they would themselves want to be treated. In other words, they should see the Great Example of the Lord and reach out with compassion and charity for all that God has created, for truly that is the spirit of the all the law, the rules and regulations of our faith.

We cannot be the kind of people we should be, that we were created to be, apart from Him. But if we profess to be His disciples, then we never seek to better ourselves or push ourselves forward or win over or take advantage of another's weakness. Instead, we will meet them with the same compassion as our Lord Who met the man born blind and healed Him, and we will live in such a way so as to personify the essence rather than the letter of the Law of God, which is love – to serve rather than to be served. This is all possible because of the great proclamation of our faith, that Christ is risen! Hatred has been overcome by charity, death has been defeated by Life, the Life of the Very One Who created it and Who bids us to live in the Light of that Love, that Life. This, Brothers and Sisters, is what this small community is about, and nothing less!

Fr. Elias

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