



Orthodox Mission of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple

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Seeing with the Eyes of our Hearts February 7, 2021

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

And he cried out, saying, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Then those who went before warned him that he should be quiet; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" (Luke 18: 38-39)

There are two different ways of seeing: physically and spiritually. The blind man in Sunday's Gospel lesson was physically blind; but he was able to see the truth clearly with the eyes of his heart.

All four Gospels tell about our Lord's healing of the blind man. There are different details in the Gospels, but that's only because each of the evangelists wanted to stress different aspects of the story. St. Luke tells a number of details in his account that help us to understand clearly the significance of this miracle for each of us.

The man that Jesus heals in this account was physically blind, but he actually saw the truth with the eyes of his heart. Not aware physically of what was happening around him, he asks what is going on as Jesus passes by. The crowds tell him that it is Jesus of Nazareth, who at that point was widely recognized as a prophet. But the blind man cries out to Him, recognizing Him to be more than a prophet; he cries, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" The crowd attempts to silence him because they consider his request to be inappropriate. The blind man is not put off, however. He continues to cry out to Jesus in faith, recognizing with his spiritual eyes Who and What Jesus is. Jesus hears his cry and heals him. The Lord says, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well." And immediately, the man is healed of his physical blindness.

The holy fathers almost unanimously point out the irony in this story. Those who could see physically failed to perceive the truth; the eyes of their hearts were blind. The man afflicted with physical blindness, however, could see the truth that the others failed to see; the blind man was the only one who would actually see the truth with the eyes of his heart.

The holy fathers remind us that all around us are forces that attempt to keep us from expressing and living our faith. Like the crowd who silenced the man who was physically blind, we are subject to the same forces that attempt to do likewise as we try to live out our faith: The delusions of the multitudes, the presuppositions of our culture of consumerism, the mad desire to achieve comfort and wealth at the expense of those who have little, the falsehood that our faith should be locked up in the church, as if it were a museum, rather than lived every day and every moment of our lives. We too may see perfectly well physically and still be blind to the truth; but, like the blind man in the story, we too are called by the Holy Spirit to open the eyes of our hearts and see the truth that Jesus Christ is indeed God and Lord, the One Who could be the foundation of every moment and every decision and every goal of our lives, the One in Whom no one ever trusts in vain. The words of St. Augustine guide us as we contemplate this lesson:

The crowd clamors, that the blind man shall not cry out. There are not a few Christians who seek to hinder us from living as Christians: like the crowd that walked with Christ, and hindered the man crying out to Christ and hungering for light from the kindness of Christ. There are such Christians: but let us overcome them and live in virtue: and our life shall be the voice of our cry to Christ They who shall persevere in doing such things as Christ has enjoined, and regard not the multitudes that hinder them ... but who love the light which Christ is about to restore to them, more than they fear the uproar of those who are hindering them, they shall in no wise be separated from Him. (St. Augustine. Sermons on the Gospel Lessons).

Like the crowd we can walk with Jesus as if He were no more than a great teacher or prophet. We can come to church and seek the protection of the Holy Mysteries, attempting to use the power therein as if it were some sort of magic, like the wands in the Harry Potter books and movies. But the truth is that the Lord Jesus is not One to be trifled with or used as if He were merely some sort of momentary means to an end. The Lord Jesus Christ must be our all in all, or He can be nothing. We must perceive this truth with the eyes of our hearts as did the blind man, or we must allow Him to pass by. Brothers and Sisters: Let us cry out to Him with true faith, "Lord Jesus Christ, son of David, have mercy on me!" Then, and only then, can we be healed of sin and its wages, death. Only if we come before Him in faith and repentance can we be healed.

Fr. Elias

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