

THE SUNDAY OF THE MAN BORN BLIND

"One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see" (John 9:25)

In this last of the gospels of illumination the chief character boldly announces that he has been enlightened--he has received his sight.

Of course, on the surface this is a physical healing, but the early Christians would have clearly understood the story in the context of baptism (just as they would have understood the two previous gospels--read in the context of the Sundays following Pascha--as baptismal gospels). This is because in the early Church the great majority of baptisms were done on Pascha and the newly baptized were instructed into the deeper mysteries of the faith in the season following the Feast (or more correctly, during the season *of* the Feast). The gospels we read at this time of year are from the most ancient cycle of Church readings; they go right back to the beginning.

The blind man received his sight when Jesus mixed His spittle with clay (note the comparison to the creation of Adam in Paradise) and placed it on the man's eyes, then told him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam--again a reference to water. The blind man, like the Paralytic meets a hostile response from the authorities--only this time the hostility is more pronounced and sustained since he was well known to have been blind from birth and the suspicion that Jesus was the healer made matters only worse.

In this case, though, the man who was born blind never wavers for even a moment. He confesses that he was born blind and that now he sees and that no one has ever heard of a sinner who could do such miracles as give sight to the blind. He was fearless even when threatened with expulsion from the community he grew up in--even when his own parents wavered. And when he finally encountered Jesus and was able to clearly see the One who healed him, he confessed Him as his Savior.

By definition we are Illumined, Enlightened, given the power of spiritual insight through Holy Baptism--though, of course, the implication is that we train our sight and turn it in the right direction; that is in the direction of the Kingdom of the Most Holy Trinity; in Whose Name we have been baptized.

In the so called, *real world*, we may be all too often tempted to act as if we are still blind because the cost of bearing witness seems too high. In a culture that has very low esteem for the virtues of humility, chastity, patience, and selfless love it may seem best or at least easiest to pretend to be blind to the very things that are of the greatest necessity and value for the healing of our world. Acting them out openly and being willing to talk about them in the public sphere may seem overwrought if not downright perilous for further advancement on our career paths! **Yet the spirit of the blind man would have us cry out, "I once was blind but now I see, and seeing, I cannot remain silent!"**

It is not so much *issues* that we are called to address, *though there certainly are many burning moral issues out there today that merit our attention*, so much as it

is the way ***we are—the way that we live our lives as Orthodox Christians-- personally and collectively*** . We need to 'fess up' as the old saying goes and tell the world Who we belong to and Who it was Who opened our eyes. Hiding His Light under the bushel of political opinions, moral and philosophical theories, or anything else is not good enough. **The fact is we were once blind and now we see. Jesus Christ gave us our sight, to the glory of God the Father, in the Power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**