

Russian Orthodox Church of the Resurrection of Christ

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Schedule for the Week of May 24 - 30, 2009

Sunday May 24	Sunday of the Blind Man / о слепом Sts Cyril & Methodius
Wednesday May 27	Vigil for Ascension 6:30 PM
Thursday May 28	Ascension / Вознесения 9:00 AM Divine Liturgy / Литургия
Saturday May 30	5:30 PM Vigil
Sunday May 31	Fathers of 1 st Ecumen. Council Свв Отец 1-го Вселенского Собора 8:30 AM Confessions, Nocturns 9:00 AM Divine Liturgy / Литургия

Homily for the Sunday of the Blind Man

The Gospel reading about the blind man, dear brethren, reveals to us how to worship God, how to pray to Him.

Passing among people, Christ saw a man who was blind from birth. Being blind from birth, this man had never seen anyone. He had no notion of human form. Even Christ he had never seen. He only knew that Christ was passing nearby, that He was a miracle-worker and that He could give him his sight. So he started crying out, calling for Christ. The people around him tried to silence him, because he was disturbing them, preventing them from hearing Christ's sermon, because he was disturbing the peace. Christ walked on, surrounded by His disciples. And they asked Him: "Master! Who sinned - this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered: "Neither this man sinned, nor his parents, but this was given so that the works of God should be manifest in him." Having said that, He spat on the ground, made clay of the spittle and anointed the eyes of the blind man with this clay, saying to him: "Go and wash in the pool of Siloam."

Let us imagine the state of this blind man. He is crying out, calling out. He is being pushed around perhaps, he is being silenced, but he continues to cry out, to call out -- in other words, he is praying. Finally, the unseen Miracle-worker approaches him. But He does not perform an instant miracle. Quite the contrary. He does something that in human terms could be considered humiliating, unpleasant. He spits on the ground and makes clay out of the spittle and soil, and then anoints the eyes of the blind man with it. And if that were not enough, He sends him with this clay on his eyes to wash his face in the pool of Siloam. But the blind man does not protest; he goes off gropingly, stumbling, subject to the ridicule of passersby. Finally he reaches the pool and washes his face. And then, having done everything that was required of him, having suffered through everything, he finally regains his sight and comes back seeing.

Here is a wonderful example for us of prayer, dear brethren. We too are spiritually blind and unable to see the Lord. But we know that He is there. So let us call out to Him, cry out to Him, asking Him for help. And let us not feel dejected if we do not receive help instantly. Perhaps we must still travel a long way, down a difficult road, as was the blind man's road to the pool of Siloam. Along this way we might meet with troubles, humiliations, such as the clay represented for the blind man. Let us endure everything. Let us be patient and obedient. Let us do whatever the Lord wills, let us follow the way that He

Вознесение Господне празднуется в 40-й день по Пасхе, который всегда приходится на четверг 6-й недели. Свое название он получил от воспоминаемого и прославляемого в этот день события Вознесения Господа нашего Иисуса Христа по плоти на Небо. В последний день Своего видимого пребывания на земле Господь Иисус Христос, явившись собравшимся вместе всем апостолам и заповедав им не отлучаться из Иерусалима, но ждать обещанного им сошествия Святого Духа, «вывел их вои из города (Иерусалима) до Вифании», на гору Елеонскую, во время пути беседуя с ними об устройении Своей Церкви на земле. На вершине Елеонской горы Господь, разъясняя святым апостолам, в чем должно состоять их предназначение, сказал им: «Вы примите силу, когда сойдет на вас Дух Святой, и будете Мне свидетелями в Иерусалиме и во всей Иудеи и Самарии, и даже до края земли». Сказав это, Спаситель поднял Свои Божественные руки и благословил Своих учеников. «И бысть, егда благословляше их, отступи от них, и возношашеся на Небо». Апостолы благоговейно поклонились благословлявшему их Господу, и с трепетным изумлением смотрели, как Он возносился на Небо, пока, наконец, облако скрыло Его от их взоров.

indicates to us, just as the blind man was told to go to the pool of Siloam. And when we do all that is required, then the Lord will respond to our prayer and will answer it, if such is His will. And the same thing will happen to us as happened to the blind man. When through the circumstances of our life the Lord asks us, "do you believe in the Son of God?" we will answer, "we believe, O Lord!" and we will worship Him.

But when we pray, we should avoid imagining anything, we should pray with a blank mind like the blind man, just knowing that the Lord is near, that He can do everything. And if for some reason things should happen contrary to our prayer, let us not lose spirit, but let us hope, let us hope even against all hope. And the Lord will do what is needful for us. So let us take on the state of the blind man, which is the best example of prayer. (*Abp. Andrew, "One Thing Needful"*)

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*Спорит простота веры с лукавым неверием. Вера, пришедши к прозревавшему слепцу, просветила умные очи его, и он ясно видит истину. Смотрите, как у него все логично. Спрашивают его: ты что о Нем, даровавшем зрение, скажешь? "Это пророк", ответил он, то есть посланник Божий, облеченный силою чудодейственной. Непререкаемо верный вывод! Но образованность книжная не хочет видеть этой верности и ищет уклониться от последствий ее. А так как это не удавалось, то она обращается к некнижной простоте со своим внушением: "воздай славу Богу; мы знаем, что человек Тот грешник". Простота веры не умеет связать этих понятий - грешность и чудодейственность, и выражает это открыто: "грешник ли Он, не знаю, одно знаю, что я был слеп, а теперь вижу". Что можно сказать против такого неведения? Но логика неверов упряма, и при всей очевидности не стыдится утверждать, что не знает откуда отверзший очи слепому. "Это и удивительно", говорит им здравая логика веры, "что вы не знаете откуда Он, а Он отверз мне очи. Но мы знаем, что грешников Бог не слушает; но кто чтит Бога и творит волю Его, того слушает. От века не слышано, чтобы кто отверз очи слепорожденному. Если бы Он не был от Бога, не мог бы творить ничего". Казалось бы, после этого ничего не оставалось, как преклониться перед силою такого заключения. Но книжная ученость терпеть не может здравой логики веры, и изгнала ее вон. . . Поди теперь, доказывай истину веры тем, у которых ум растлился от упорства в неверии. Неверы всех времен - люди одного покроя. (*Святитель Феофан Затворник. Мысли на каждый день года*)*

So we have come to the Feast of the Ascension of Our Lord. Thus we have come to the last day of Christ's physical presence on Earth. This marks the fulfilment of all things, since His Conception at the Annunciation to the Holy Virgin, His Birth and all the events of His earthly life, recorded for us in the Gospels

Christ came down from Heaven in order to destroy the power of Satan over mankind. Christ was crucified and rose from the dead in order to destroy death. Christ ascends into the skies in order to raise up fallen human nature to the heights of Heaven

But He ascends not as he came down. He ascends taking with Himself a human body, a human soul, a human mind, a human will, all the attributes of human nature, except of course for sin, for Christ's human nature is human nature as it was first intended to be, not fallen human nature, but human nature redeemed and made all comely

We should note, however, that all these victories of Christ over Satan, death and sin are accomplished in humility

At His Birth there was, as we would say now, no media. All happened in obscurity, lowliness and poverty, as the Saviour of mankind was born in a cave by the ox and the ass. At His Crucifixion also there was no glory: on the contrary, there was shame, thieves, reviling, mockery, bodily death, a lonely death.

At His Resurrection, nobody saw anything. The women who saw the empty tomb were not even believed. Only a few dozen believers came to believe in the first few weeks after His Resurrection. So also at His Ascension the only witnesses were His Mother and the eleven disciples amid the obscure olives groves on the Mount outside the City.

We see that all the great events, all the victories, of the life of Christ were accompanied by humility. This is because in the Church victory is humility. Every act of humility is a victory over the pride of Satan.

And in order to grant us the opportunity for humility, at the last event of His physical presence amongst us, Christ gives us two things. Firstly, He comforts us and the disciples with the promise of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, Who will guide us into all truth, into all humility. Secondly, through His holy angels, He reminds us that as He ascends, so He will return, with angels and a cloud of glory. He reminds us that He will return in His Second and Glorious Coming to judge all the Earth.

When He ascends, He promises us the Holy Spirit. When He descends at the Second Coming, He will come in glory as the Victor over death to judge all deathly acts, that is, all sins, for as the Apostle writes, the wages of sin are death.

Thus God is victorious in humility

Therefore the Orthodox Church and faithful Orthodox Christians are also victorious, but only in humility. God is the Merciful Saviour among us, granting us the Holy Spirit in order to guide us on our path to the victory of humility. As we have sung this day: 'I am with you and no-one will be against you'.

God is the Righteous Judge among us, granting us His Coming again as the Judge of the Universe, guiding us on our path to the victory of humility: 'I am with you and no-one will be against you'. (*from Orthodox England*)