

does not lie in the supernatural cure, but in the spiritual teaching, which as a divine message arises from the activity of our Christ.

The blind man confesses his faith in his benefactor as Savior and Deliverer of the world, at the same moment when a whole society, including his parents, as well, who together with him were suffering the consequences of sin, turned their back on him, even "for the fear of the Jews", they turn away from him. How does he manage it? The many year long illness and the trial of patience have galvanized him, so that with practical philosophy he distinguishes what is beneficial and rejects what is superfluous. Afterwards his illness itself safeguards him from strong temptations which are customary to healthy people, whereas they were also preventing him from getting mixed up in the challenges of sin, with the result-even though he was blind, his spiritual vision is pure.

The message of our Lord is very clear. Many times the higher and furthermore true theories about life come from the people of pain, who through the philosophy of uncomplaining patience, conclude in the discovery of faith and in the embracing of it at every cost, as the only useful and saving thing in this world.

Archimandrite I. N

SUNDAY, JUNE 5 2016 SUNDAY OF THE BLIND MAN, *The Holy Hieromartyr Dorotheus, Bishop of Tyre, Holy Martyrs Nicandrus, Gorgus and Apollonus and those with them Christophoros & Konon the Martyrs of Rome*

TONE OF THE WEEK: *Plagal of the First Tone*

EOTHINON : **Eighth Eothinon**

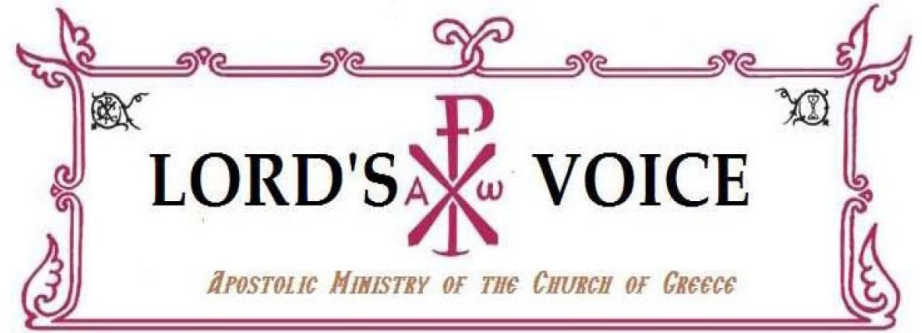
EPISTLE: *Acts of the Apostles 16:16-34*

GOSPEL: *John 9:1-38*

NEXT SUNDAY, JUNE 12, 2016 SUNDAY, JUNE 12, 2016 FATHERS OF THE 1ST COUNCIL, *Onuphrius of Egypt, Peter the Athonite, Holy Martyr Antonine, John the Soldier of Egypt.*

EPISTLE: *Acts of the Apostles 20:16-18, 28-36*

GOSPEL: *John 17:1-13*



64TH YEAR

JUNE 5, 2016

PAMPHLET # 23 (3288)

ILLNESS AS A BLESSING

What a great problem, are considered, in our age, the people who from birth are suffering from some illness, are characterized as handicapped or are suffering from some incurable disease. Not because, unfortunately, some people reached the point of facing them as a burden in society and organized social care, more especially, the relatives sometimes murmur beneath the responsibility and the bond of continual ministry. But because merely with their existence, they challenge! They challenge the modern and prevailing beliefs which want a person limited to the conditions and forms of this life, almighty bound to his desires, destined to claim, the always temporal enjoyment.

If however these things are man's goal, then why are people with special needs, with special gifts, with a special mission in this life born, at the moment when they are not able to achieve all the above mentioned things? The world usually passes by this question with the customary excuse: "they were unlucky." So, as unlucky, or as an accident in the best case, these most fortunate people of this life are faced.... Why the most fortunate?

"Lord, who sinned?"

The discrete question of the disciples is caused by the sight of a man born blind, in their road. Who sinned, Lord, and he was born thus? He himself or his parents? It was the customary, superficial and easy reaction to this type of circumstance. And just as much as it is a fact, that corruption, illness and especially death, were not granted as an inheritance of man, by Holy God, but they forced our nature as a result of disobedience and of sin, it is equally a fact that in speaking about sin and its consequences, we people speak as if all these things concern something outside of us. And furthermore we formulate very beautiful theories, even theological ones, without having a sense of how deeply the matter concerns us in all dimensions of our existence.

SUNDAY OF THE BLIND MAN

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN 9:1-38

At that time, as Jesus passed by, he saw a man blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him. We must work the works of him who sent me, while it is day; night comes, when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." As he said this, he spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle and anointed the man's eyes with the clay, saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing. The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar, said, "Is not this the man who used to sit and beg?" Some said, "It is he"; others said, "No, but he is like him." He said, "I am the man." They said to him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" He answered, "The man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash'; so I went and washed and received my sight." They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."

They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. The Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, "He put clay on my eyes and I washed, and I see." Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" There was a division among them. So they again said to the blind man, "What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet."

The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight, until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight, and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" His parents answered, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but how he now sees we do not know, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age, he will speak for himself." His parents said this because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess him to be Christ he was to be put out of the synagogue. Therefore his parents said, "He is of age, ask him."

So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and said to him, "Give God the praise; we know that this man is a sinner." He answered, "Whether he is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I know, that though I was blind, now I see." They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" He answered them, "I have told you already and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you too want to become his

disciples?" And they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from." The man answered, "Why, this is a marvel! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." They answered him, "You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?" And they cast him out.

Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, "Do you believe in the Son of man?" He answered, "And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?" Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and it is he who speaks to you." He said, "Lord, I believe": and he worshiped him.

Christ's answer comes to degrade this superficiality and lightness. Neither did he sin, nor his parents, but he was born blind so that the works could become obvious which the power and the goodness of God, works for the sake of human nature. Many people hasten to interpret this answer as declaring expediency and they maintain that it implies that the man born blind was born thus, so that Christ could have the capability of working the miracle of his cure. But when did Holy God ever want the hardship of his creature and when did He hasten to take advantage of it? Let us not mistreat Him with thoughtless theories and human misunderstandings.

Christ's answer implies mainly the increased protection which Holy God richly grants to whoever needs it, and forbearing, demands it. Because if a person with the demand of disobedience drew also, all the consequences, with pain and corruption prevailing, Holy God – condescending to the hardship of His creature – gave him the means to forbear, so that he would not be crushed by the hardship of the illness, and furthermore of the chronic illness. Not only does He shower patience as a blessing from above, but simultaneously He also protects the person himself from sin, making the illness in its spiritual dimension, a bath of cleansing and a cause for complete dependence, with conditions of blind obedience to the divine will.

The blind man confesses his faith

Just as the unsettling Light of the Resurrection inundates the period that we are undergoing and brightens our being, the Gospel presents to us also the man born blind, being benefactored with a miracle and seeing the sensorial light. The impressive thing, as in every miracle which the Gospel documents,