10/06/2024

Archbishop Elpidophoros Homily for the Sunday of the Man Born Blind



Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Χριστὸς Ἀνέστη!

Christ is Risen!

What a joy that today I am able to be with this marvelous community of Saints Constantine and Helen and to celebrate with your new pastor, Protopresbyter Apostolos Chasapis Homily for the first time. He has been here for two months, and I am so happy that I can visit while we are still in the period of Pentecostarion. In fact, this Sunday is the last Sunday we shall celebrate in this year's Paschal Season – that which we call the Sunday of the Man Born Blind.

Today’s Gospel, that which tells of his miraculous healing, is such a perfect example for us of how the power of God can restore even the darkest condition of life. Jesus notices the blind man, but the Disciples immediately raise his condition, and start what we call today “the blame game,” when they say to the Lord:

“Rabbi, who sinned, that he was born blind? The man himself? Or his parents?”*

When the Disciples asked Jesus this question, the Lord did not respond to them as they probably expected. The Disciples offered only two choices, the man, or his parents. For them, the whole matter was ‘either this, or that!’ But Jesus gave an answer that was far beyond the sight of the Disciples, one that invited them into a deeper understanding of reality. The Lord answered them:

“No one sinned; neither the man nor his parents. He was born blind so that God’s deeds might be manifest in him.”†

You see, my friends, the Lord sees beyond the narrow band of light that we can see. As the Divine Wisdom of God, He beholds every condition of every person, and likewise, He sees the condition of His Church at all times. He sees, but He does not judge, although He is the only truly Righteous Judge. He has no anxiety about us, no worry. And in that moment, the Lord Jesus did not see the Man Born Blind as problem. He saw him as a solution.

The Disciples, however, were troubled by the very appearance of the Man Born Blind, who was at a distinct disadvantage, for he could see neither them nor the Lord. His blindness, a blindness from birth, did not fit into Disciple’s view of a Loving Creator.

They asked their question because they felt that somebody had to be the blame, someone had to take the blame. All they wanted to know was: “Whose fault is it? How can we explain this condition?” We Greeks know this question all too well: Ποιός φταίε;

And so it is sometimes with us in the life of the Church. We don’t understand a particular situation, so we point the finger. We seek to put the responsibility somewhere, usually on anybody but ourselves. It is as if the question: “Am I my brother’s keeper?”‡ – that which the fratricidal Cain retorted to God, Who was inquiring about his younger brother Abel, whom Cain had murdered – has become a refrain of despair and disinterest. One more excuse for not facing the simple yet profound truth that we are responsible for one another.

The Lord’s reply made the Disciples’ question irrelevant. The Man’s blindness wasn’t about sin, guilt, fault, blame or anything else. The Lord looked beyond into the eternal purposes of the Divine Will, and saw what could be manifest in this Man who was born blind.

My beloved brethren– this is why we are here together today. As Christians, we are called by God to be responsible for one another. And this mutual responsibility binds us together by faith to be ‘keepers’ of all our brothers and sisters.

Instead of looking for blame, let us look where God’s glory might be revealed. Revealed through care for one another, through forgiveness, through mercy, and through love.

May we always be such keepers of one another, and glorify our God Who is Risen from the dead to grant eternal life to every soul. Amen.

Χριστὸς Ἀνέστη!

* John 9:2.

† John 9:3.

‡ Genesis 4:9.

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