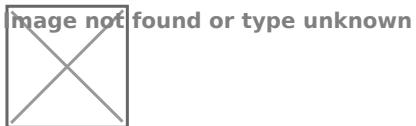


Archbishop Elpidophoros Homily for the Fourteenth Sunday of Luke



My Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Once again, I am spiritually refreshed to find myself among you, the faithful Christians of the Saint Peter the Apostle Parish here in the Bronx. Your faith inspires me and your persistence is an example of that faith.

Not unlike the Blind Man whom we hear of in the Gospel reading of today. We see how his own determination was rewarded. In the days of our Lord as today, blindness was an extremely severe hardship, and could really marginalized you as a person. You might be the richest man in your town, but if you lost your sight, you would be reduced to beg for your daily bread. We see how overwhelming his situation was, because he is not standing on the side of the road. Rather, he sits - tired, dejected, and lonely.

But suddenly, he hears a commotion, something is happening that he cannot understand, because he cannot see it. The Blind Man asks, what's going on? That's when he hears that the Rabbi, Jesus of Nazareth, is passing by. Stories about Jesus, especially among the common people, were in wide circulation, and giving hope to the hopeless.

Immediately the Blind Man shouts out: "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" But the crowd was large and perhaps the Lord was out of earshot. Some people - those in front of the Lord and clearing His path, tried to shut him up - to take away his voice. But he would not be silenced. He cried out even louder: "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Now I ask you, my beloved Christians. Do you imagine the Lord did not hear him the first time? Why did our Lord Jesus wait? Or perhaps better, what was the Lord Jesus waiting for?

Like the Blind Man, there are times in our lives when we feel as if all has faded to black, and our prospects for a fulfilling life are disappearing. We become dejected, even depressed, and just settle into way of life that is as unfulfilling as it is

frustrating. And then ... an opportunity arises. We sense that God has opened a way for us! But some people in our lives might tell us to be quiet and just accept our condition and our circumstances. It is a curious human condition that oftentimes people think they know better than God.

And yet, in these moments of being thwarted by others, the Lord is calling us to even greater faith. That is why the Blind Man called out to Jesus even more loudly, when others were trying to silence him! Maybe that is why the Lord Jesus waited for those few moments, to allow the Blind Man to find his voice.

We also should meet the challenges of life with a powerful cry from the depths of our souls: "Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me!"

This is not desperation, but determination. We meet hopelessness with hope. We meet doubt with faith. We meet the moment of our being silenced by others with a full-throated cry unto Heaven.

When the Blind Man learned that it was Jesus who was passing by, he knew as well the chance might never come around again. He risked everything to encounter the Lord, and thus he gained his reward.

I often think of the commotion on that road to Jericho, when the Lord abruptly halted, listening to the shouts of Blind Man. Those who were trying to silence him were suddenly upended, because they had gone out in front of Jesus, making themselves important and as if to say to everyone else: "Get out of our way; the Rabbi is coming."

Such is life in the Church, sometimes. People take upon themselves roles and activities, as if God Himself does not know what He wants to do!

And yet, I wonder how everyone in the crowd felt as they saw our Lord command that Blind Man to be brought into His Divine Presence. Suddenly, the least important became the most important - or as the Scripture says, the last became the first.¹

In that moment of encounter, the Lord asked that Blind Man an open, and I would say, obvious question: "What would you have me do for you?"²

The Blind Man did not ask for money, or fame, or power. Just that he might see again. And the Lord rewarded his faith and his persistence.

My Brothers and Sisters:

Such is the spiritual life for all of us. No one of us is perfect, without a “blind spot,” if you will. But when the Lord passes by, and we are steadfast in our faith, we will find ourselves in His Divine Presence, and the deepest prayers of our hearts will be answered.

No one can oppose us. No one can silence us. No one block us.

As Saint Peter’s friend and co-equal says in his Letter to the Christians at Rome:

If God is for us, who can be against us?³

May we ever hold to such a faith, and be held in such a knowledge of God.

Amen.

1 Cf. Matthew 20:16.

2 Luke 18:41.

3 Romans 8:31.

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