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## **Homily on the Fourteenth Sunday of Luke by His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America**



Homily By His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America  
At the Divine Liturgy on the Fourteenth Sunday of Saint Luke  
Saint Basil Greek Orthodox Church  
New Haven, Connecticut

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

I am very happy to be back in New Haven – with you, the devout faithful of the Saint Basil community. While we have not reached the end of the pandemic yet, we are slowly getting closer, as the vaccines are becoming more and more available. I am hopeful that this New Year of 2021 will bring us beyond the limitations of the pandemic, and allow all of our parishes across the country to return to full community life.

Indeed, this has been a trying time for the country, for our society, and most especially for the Church. And this is because it is in the Church that we mark the great passages of our lives — that is, birth, marriage, family and, ultimately, our final passing unto eternal life.

I have had to do many services that were severely restricted in this time. Because of those experiences, I have a special sensitivity to the families that had to endure limitations around these personal milestones of their lives. Whether they were happy or sorrowful occasions, there was a great deal of patience and endurance that was manifest.

This is something that I have seen again and again throughout this past year. And the key to our overcoming has been our fortitude, as well as our perseverance in the face of challenges.

We are not unlike the Blind Man that we read of in today's Gospel. He was a person who had become blind at some point in his life; however, we do not know from when, and for how long. But in the days of our Lord, being blind was an extremely severe hardship, as it really marginalized a person. You could be the richest man in your town, but if you lost your sight, you were reduced to begging for your daily bread. We see the defeat in the Blind Man, because he is not standing on the side of the road, but sitting. He was tired, dejected and lonely.

But then, he hears a commotion, something happening that he could not understand, because he could not see. This is much like what happened to us last March. We did not see the upheaval of the pandemic coming. But very soon, we began to feel the consequences.

The Blind Man asked what it was – why the confusion? Then he hears that Jesus of Nazareth is passing by. Immediately he cries out: “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” The crowd was large, and perhaps the Lord was out of earshot. People rebuked him, trying to take away his voice. But he would not be silenced or deterred. Instead, he continued to cry out even louder: “Son of David, have mercy on me!”

Now, I ask you, my beloved Christians: Do you imagine that the Lord did not hear him the first time? Did the Lord, perhaps, want something else?

In this story, I behold a great deal of what we have experienced this past year. A sudden commotion came upon us, and our response was the same as Blind Man. For all these months, we have been crying out from the depths of our souls: “Jesus,

Son of God, have mercy on me!”

And, perhaps, like the Blind Man, the Lord has heard us from the very first moment. He commanded the Blind Man to be brought before Him. We do not know how long the Blind Man sat by the side of the road, but we do know that the Lord ultimately granted his request, that he might see again.

And I believe that the Lord will also heed our cries and prayers, and that we will live again – not merely as we did before the pandemic, but we will do so with renewed compassion for those who suffered;

With renewed appreciation for the blessings we enjoy;

With renewed vitality and energy to conduct our lives with greater responsibility, and with greater love for our neighbors and our world.

My friends, the Blind Man, who received his sight again, received more than his vision. He received a new θεωρία for the world and for his life.

I pray, that as we come to the end of the pandemic, those of us who are blessed to keep living will have a new θεωρία for our own lives – one that will expand our hearts, enlighten our minds, and enrich our souls. Amen.

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