

Sunday of the Blind Man (6th of Pascha)



This Sunday commemorates the gift of sight to the man born blind by Jesus Christ. The miracle of the healing of the man born blind is very closely connected to the days of Pentecost by Christians: similar to others, it is commemorated by the Holy Church in this period, and by its occurrence this miracle announces the Divine power and glory of the risen Lord (John 9:31-33, 38). According to the explanation in the Synaxarion, the miracle of the healing of the man born blind is commemorated on this Sunday because it was accomplished in Pentecost. In the example of the man born blind, who was healed by Jesus Christ the Holy Church presents an image of any sinner, who is blind from birth, "because all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23), but by the spiritual and physical gift of the wonderful light the eyes of the blind man teaches that the Enlightener is truly the Lord alone, and only in His light is it possible to behold the true and saving light. Therefore the Holy Church in the hymns for this day also appeals to us to cry out: "O Christ God, the Sun of righteousness, Who by your most pure touch enlightened all, now give sight to our spiritual eyes and show us to be the sons of the day", and "our sight of sincere feeling"; "Since You were born from the Virgin, filling all with light, fill me with light for You are compassionate"; "On my wretched soul which battles at night with the darkness of passions, hasten and have compassion, and shine in me, O mental Sun, the rays of the bright star by which you took out the night from the light"; "Enlighten my mental eyes which are blind, O Lord, from the darkness of sin, and enlighten, O Compassionate One, my closed eyes being washed by tears of humility and repentance"; "Grant me, O Christ, a stream of inscrutable wisdom and knowledge from on high, O existing Light of those in darkness and Guide of all those gone astray" 1).

Troparion of the Resurrection, tone 5

Kontakion, tone 4

**I come to Thee, O Christ,
Blind from birth in my spiritual eyes,
And call to Thee in repentance:
Thou art the most radiant Light of those in darkness.**

(1967 OCA translation)

Matins Gospel, 8, John 20:11-18; **Epistle**: Acts 16:16-34; sel. 38. **Gospel**: John 9:1-38; sel. 34.

By a decision of the Holy Synod in 1881, No. 616, on the Sunday of the Blind Man, city and monastery churches (names of which are gathered beforehand by the rectors of the churches) make special collections in charity boxes for the benefit of the Trusteeship for the care of the blind. According to a Ukase of the Holy Synod, August 8, 1885 the sermon on the Sunday of the Blind Man should be delivered at the usual time before the Dismissal of the Liturgy. Finally the local Diocesan Authorities (see, for example, *Viatka and Saratovskii Eparkh. ved.* (Viatka and Saratov Diocesan News) 1894, 9) made such an arrangement for the procedure for the special collection for the benefit of the blind also in the village churches on the Sunday of the Blind Man 2).

The instances of the miraculous healing of those born blind by various images are glorified in the services also on the following days: on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday.

Notes:

1) According to the teaching of St. Tikhon of Zadonsk, "whatever is physical darkness for the eyes is a sin for the human soul". "The spiritual darkness so darkens and blinds the eyes of the soul, that the sinner walks like the blind: he doesn't know where the path leads him; he doesn't see before him the torment of an eternal death in which he might fall; he doesn't distinguish vice from virtue, evil from good, truth from lies, true good fortune from evil fortune, and, thus, seeing he does not see and acts by touching like the blind. Does he live in good fortune? He becomes violent, as an untrained and unrestrained horse, and does not see that with this good fortune God draws him to Himself as a father of a little child draws an apple. Will misfortune visit him? He grumbles, is indignant and blames, that as if he told a lie; he makes complaints and says a malicious word: "Am I a liar? In what have I sinned? Am I really more sinful than others? Am I worthy of this? Does my work deserve this?" "He justifies himself, being full of every kind of untruth; he cleanses himself, being all besmirched; he considers himself unworthy of temporal punishment, but worthy of the eternal; he praises his merits, which stand for nothing". "All of creation, the heaven, the sun, the moon, the stars, the earth and its fulfillment, as if by mouth "tells of the glory of God" (Psalm 16:2); but the blind sinner does not feel the majesty of His glory and does not tremble". "God, both through creation and by His word, reveals Himself for everyone; but the sinner, like a deaf person, does not hear His word and does not recognize the Lord. He hears the name of God, but he does not recognize God: he hears the voice of the Lord only with carnal instead of spiritual ears, and therefore, hearing he does not

hear and seeing he does not see. When God is preached by His holy word, then His sacred will is also preached; but the sinner doesn't know it and does not make it his own. His omnipotence and majesty is preached, before which the sinner is not humble. His righteousness is preached before which the sinner is not afraid and does not honor. His truth is preached before which the sinner does not believe. His omnipresence is preached, before which the sinner does not show reverence. He does not show it because does not recognize Him. His most wise reason is preached, in which the sinner does not discern. His highest holiness is preached which the sinner does not honor. His supreme authority is preached which the sinner does not obey. His awesome glory is preached which the sinner does not honor. His timeless goodness is preached, in which the sinner makes no effort to participate. His fearful judgment is preached before which the sinner does not tremble, and so forth. Thus, the sinner is like "the man out of his mind who cannot know, and the stupid cannot understand (LXX Psalm 91:7)" God and the acts of God. "And not only in relation to God, but also in relation to his neighbor, i. e. to any human, the blind man is a carnal and unenlightened man. We see that a person does evil to his neighbor, which he himself does not want; and does not do good to him, which he himself wants. We see that he is indignant and angry at the one who offends him, he abuses, abases, blames, discredits, lies about him, steals, kidnaps, takes away that which it his, and does other offenses; but he himself does such evil, or repays evil with evil, is not ashamed and does not sense this. On the other hand, he wants his neighbor to be merciful to him and not leave him in need, for example: to quench his thirst and to give him drink when he thirsts, clothe the naked, welcome the stranger into his home and to comfort the sick and visit those in prison and do other works of mercy for him, all of this he wants; this truth is indisputable; but he himself does not want to do the same for a neighbor. We see that this evil is self-love, an untruth and blindness in Christians, who either silently pass by his neighbors living in misery as if not seeing them, or is ashamed to ask: what can I do for him? Many have plentiful food and a magnificent table for themselves, but do not care about a hungry neighbor; others wear all kinds of expensive clothes, and do not care about their naked neighbor; others build rich, large and tall houses and decorate the rest of the building, but for their neighbor who does not have a place to lay his head and to rest they do not care; they have silver, gold and other riches, comfortable for soul and life, that is kept whole and is saved, but there is no care for their neighbor who is burdened with debt and it is torment or prison for him for his shortfalls or sitting debts and suffering. We see this self-love and untruth in Christians: for not only they do evil, but also they don't do good for their neighbors, there is the untruth. But, what it is even worse, we see that many Christians are not ashamed and are not afraid to steal, to kidnap and to be cunning, to flatter, to lie, to deceive, to slander, to scandalize, to denounce, to

abuse, to commit adultery and make other offenses against their neighbor that they themselves would not want. All this comes from blindness ".

2) Blindness is a most terrible misfortune that can befall a man. The entire life of the blind man is condemned to plod along in the most desolate existence: he is deprived of those joys that enable one to discern God's world. The very type of such suffering involuntarily invites participation, and it is no wonder, therefore, that the deprived blind in all Russia get the special attention of benefactors, and in the ranking of the needy the blind are preferred over all other cripples for acts of mercy. But the alms and in general only money alone help is insufficient for the speedy relief of the blind: even in the best cases it provides for them only in the present, not giving them any hope for a brighter future. The overall objective of a reasonable oversight of the blind should end in helping them, whenever possible, to come nearer to those who see and to accustom them to independent, productive work, which would fulfill their leisure time and would give them the necessary means for existence. In Russia the performance of this task was taken up by a special Trusteeship, founded in 1881 and received, in memory of the continuing care for the blind by the Ruling Empress who reposes in God, under the name: "Trusteeship of the Empress Maria Alexandrovna for the Blind". The fundamental beginning of the activity of this Trusteeship of Her Highness was authorized on February 13, 1881, and following this the institution then was worthy to be accepted under the August protection of Her Imperial Majesty the Ruling Empress Maria Feodorovna. The Trusteeship made its objective to minister and oversee perhaps most of the blind in Russia without distinction of race, age, social position, and religious creed. For this it cares, first of all, for the building of schools for training blind children to read special books and refuges for the training the blind adults in the crafts, continuing to care for them even after they leave from these institutions. Irrespective of this, the Trusteeship supports through its financial resources even such institutions for the blind, which are not part of its cognizance, and funds bursars for the accounting of their sums. The Trusteeship also cares about the prevention of blindness, and, in this purview, holds in its account beds in various eye clinics and supplies for the blind who hope for treatment, with the necessary financial resources for travel to those cities, in which there are eye doctors. A subject of special concern to the Trusteeship, by the way, is the printing by convex font of books for the blind, gleaned from the statistical data about the blind, with the purpose of finding out the best means for the relief of their situation and for the reduction of cases of the loss of sight in the population, and the distribution to all Russia of the useful items of information about the ways of improvement in the situation of the blind and the prevention of blindness. One of the main conditions for the successful achievement of the goals of the Trusteeship

is the institution of local bodies in the provinces, for which purpose Branches and Committees of the Trusteeship are open in many cities. The Trusteeship is represented in all the provinces. Up to the present time through the efforts of the Trusteeship many institutions for the blind are open, such as, schools for blind children are in St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev, Reval (Tallin), Kazan, Kostroma, Kharkov, Voronezh and Odessa; refuges for blind adults are in Kamenets-Podolia and Ufa, shelters for elderly blind are in Voronezh and Perm, and an eye hospital in Tashkent. All institutions of the Trusteeship are always accessible to the persons interested in them. In them handicrafts of the blind are sold and orders are accepted. The institution of the Trusteeship doesn't use any grants but depends exclusively on charitable donations and on membership dues. Meaningful financial means are necessary for the maintenance of these institutions, for fixed costs, and to provide for unforeseen expenses, which gives an opportunity for the institutions to exist in times of national disasters, when the donations, in spite of the good will of the community, may temporarily be lessened; for once the blind are accepted into an institution only if they are capable of working and teaching, would certainly end the established course of teaching: there is no greater misfortune than having seen the light to again plunge into darkness, and, having tried hope for a better future to lose it for ever. Therefore the Trusteeship carefully opens a new institution and tirelessly worries about increasing its material means. Its expenses grow annually and are already more than 150,000 rubles a year. In the future they should inevitably still increase, in the process of opening new and expanding existing institutions. But with expectation and hope the Trusteeship looks to the future: not to allow the Russian community, the Russian nation, to be smothered with the work of Christian charity. Certainly, there is an obligation for community charity to support in every possible way the Trusteeship pursuing so good a purpose. Up to now the necessary means were delivered to the Trusteeship, mainly, with the blessing of the Holy Synod, from the annual church special collections taken on the Sunday of the Blind Man. Surely it may be that our Church pastors both in the future as well as in the past years will use every effort to influence their flock for the aid, who and how many are able, for the sacred duty of the oversight and training of the blind. Those who wish to enter into the membership of the Trusteeship (with the payment of 10 rubles annually or 150 rubles at once), or to offer donations outside of the church collection should apply to the representatives of the Trusteeship, who are placed in all provincial cities, or to the Office of the Council of the Trusteeship (St. Petersburg, Great Koniushennaia Street, Build. No. 1, apt. 24).