

The Sixth Sunday of Pascha Commemoration of the Blind Man

Nikephoros the Confessor, archbishop of Constantinople; New-martyrs
Demetrios of Philadelphia, John of Trebizond, and Constantine of Athos

Sunday, June 2, 2019

Tone 5; Eothinon 8

Apolytikion for the Resurrection (Tone 5)

Let us believers praise and worship the Word; coeternal with the Father and the Spirit, born of the Virgin for our salvation. For He took pleasure in ascending the Cross in the flesh to suffer death; and to raise the dead by His glorious Resurrection.

Apolytikion for our Patron, Michael the Archangel (Tone 2)

O ye foremost of the heavenly hosts, we beseech thee, though we are unworthy, pray that we may be encompassed with a shadow of thine unearthly glory; preserving us who kneel and cry endlessly: Deliver us from oppression since ye are the prince of the highest powers.

Kontakion of Pascha (Tone 8)

O Immortal One, when Thou didst descend into the tomb, Thou didst destroy the power of Hades; and Thou didst rise victorious, O Christ God. Thou hast said to the ointmentbearing women: Rejoice! And Thou gavest peace to Thy Disciples, O Bestower of Resurrection to those Who had fallen.

Daily Readings

THE EPISTLE (for the Sixth Sunday of Pascha)

Thou, O Lord, shall keep us and preserve us.
Save me, O Lord, for the godly man hath disappeared.

The Reading from the Acts of the Apostles (16:16-34)

In those days, as we Apostles were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by soothsaying. She followed Paul and us, crying, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation." And this she did for many days. But Paul was

annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, "I charge you in the Name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And it came out that very hour. But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the rulers; and when they had brought them to the magistrates they said, "These men are Jews and they are disturbing our city. They advocate customs which it is not lawful for us Romans to accept or practice." The crowd joined in attacking them; and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods. And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely. Having received this charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened and every one's fetters were unfastened. When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried with a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here." And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out and said, "Men, what must I do to be saved?" And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their wounds, and he was baptized at once, with all his family. Then he brought them up into his house, and set food before them; and he rejoiced with all his household that he had believed in God.

THE GOSPEL (for the Sixth Sunday of Pascha)

The Reading of the Holy Gospel is according to St. John (9:1-38)

At that time, when Jesus was passing, 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. I 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 any one 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 God?” 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.

A Note Regarding Holy Communion

Since we understand Communion to mean that we have all things in common, sharing an identical Faith, *only* those who are members of the Orthodox Church and who have prepared themselves through prayer, fasting and recent Confession may participate in Holy Communion. (We invite all, however, to partake of the blessed bread which is distributed at the dismissal.) Please see the Pastor for inquiries on how to become a member.

OFFERINGS

Holy Bread is being offered for the forty-day memorial of the newly-departed servant of God, Kyle Anthony Jaeger (+23 April, 2019), beloved nephew, by Lila Coudsy, Richard & Jeannette Hollow, Khalil & Susan. Memory eternal.

Prayers are also offered in loving memory of our sweet mother and sitto, Sara Coudsy (18 years), by her children: Ted & Cecelia, Jeannette & Richard, Khalil & Susan, Lila, and the grandchildren: Ted Jr., Cathy, Nick, Matthew, Perla, Dannai, Justin, Mikayla, Sara, Esther, and great grandchild Noelle. Memory eternal.

Prayers are also offered in loving memory of our dear Richard Hollow, Jr. (20 years), Benjamin Khalil Coudsy (2 years), Kyle Jaeger (40 days) from the entire Coudsy and Hollow families. Memory eternal.

Prayers are also offered in memory of our dear friend, Elizabeth Ajalat by the Coudsy and Hollow families. Memory eternal.

Holy Bread is being offered by the Deeb family for the one-year memorial of the servant of God, Karen Deeb Kouri (+2 June, 2018). Memory eternal.

A special offering for prayer is being made for the repose of the newly-departed servant of God, Violet Kavan (+29 May, 2019), by her brother and sisters: Mary Evans, Joe Berry, Nora Tamoush; her niece, Cindy, and nephew Richard Nicholas Tamoush and family. Memory eternal.

[The schedule of services for Violet Kavan include: Funeral Service - Monday, June 10 at 10 a.m. followed by the Graveside Trisagion and interment at St. Nicholas Memorial Park (Valhalla Cemetery) at 11:30 a.m.]

Prayers are being offered for the repose of the newly-departed servant of God, Mikhail Kneizeh (+28 May, 2019), beloved husband of Natali Kneizeh, father of Walid, Bassem and Joe Kneizeh, seven grandchildren, and the brother of Essa, Marianna, Laurette, and Saadallah. Memory eternal.

[The schedule of services for Mikhail Kneizeh include: Monday, June 3rd: Viewing and Visitation at Rose Funeral Home (4444 Cochran Street; Simi Valley; 93063); Tuesday, June 4, Funeral Service at 10 a.m. followed by the Graveside Trisagion and interment at Assumption Cemetery (1380 Fitzgerald Road; Simi Valley 93065)]

We congratulate the following members of the graduating class of 2019:

Rafeef Khleif - CSUN; Bachelor of Science, Biotechnology
Anthony Michael Papp - Tulane University (New Orleans);
Business Degree

Sierra Dunphy - Cathedral High School (San Diego) to attend LMU
Sophie Sleman - LMU; Liberal Arts Degree

Emily Meena - CSUN; Bachelor of Business Administration / Marketing

Courtney Meena - Hart High School (Valencia)

Katherine Foyle - University of Colorado (Boulder);
Bachelor of Science in Molecular Biology

Logan Foyle - Monterey High School (Burbank)

Jessica Abughazaleh - High School (Florida)
to attend UCF (Computer Science)

Samantha Abughazaleh - High School (Florida) to attend UCF (Business)

Nicholas Azzam - High School (Simi Valley)

Included in our prayers throughout the month of June are those celebrating their birthday: Issa Ababseh (6/1), Tiffany Akoury (6/2), Alexandre Abdennour (6/3), Kacy Coury-Resch (6/3), Dominick Milkie (6/4), Erica Nasser (6/4), Edward Saade (6/4), Genevieve Ababseh (6/5), Helen Saleh (6/5), Donald Simon (6/6), Ramona Darmour (6/8), Xander Paul Fronoher (6/8), Diana Nasser (6/8), Noelle Sophia Sabbah (6/8), Stephanie Haddad (6/12), Britton Luke McLinn (6/14), Michael C. Srouer (6/14), Shylee Srouer (6/15), Daher Ababseh (6/17), Peter Anthony Yazbek (6/17), Jackie Ababseh (6/18), Charles Malouf (6/18), Megan Sullivan (6/18), Salwa Ayoub (6/19), Michael and Elias Azzam (6/19), Paula Simon Kence (6/19), Alexandra Mallouk (6/20), Stephen Haddad (6/21), Najla Barakat (6/22), Father Minas Sarchizian (6/24), Olivia Grace Abraham (6/25), Brittney Ajalat (6/25), Christiana Matarese (6/26), Father Michael Habib (6/27), Ronald Zraick (6/27); Hilalah Haddad (6/29), Malia Isabella Kence (6/29), Hunter Koa Peter Gascou (6/30), E. Frank Skaff, Jr. (6/30); and those celebrating their wedding anniversary: Connie & James Barilla (6/1), Vivian & Britton Purvis (6/4), Brittney & Michael Ajalat (6/6), Shereen & Chad Manning (6/6), Caroline & John Malouf (6/6), Fuad & Sawsan Rafidi (6/6), Esther & Albert Bitar (6/8), Mitchel & Diana Thabit (6/8), Angela & Christopher Abughazaleh (6/11), Amanda & Orlando Pena (6/15), Abeer & Mushir Khleif (6/21), Derek & Debi Dodds (6/24). May God grant them all many years!

Included in our prayers for the departed throughout the month of June are:

Joseph Butros, +1 June, 1950	Minor Habeeb, +30 June, 2000
Frank N. Skaff, +12 June, 1960	Sara Coudsy, +2 June, 2001
Kevork Arakelian, +6 June, 1963	Lut'fallah Esber, +20 June, 2001
Nassima Chammas Milkie, 1968	Dr. George Thabit, +24 June, 2001
Michael Barkett, +10 June, 1971	Matthew Ansara, +25 June, 2001
Nasser Homsy, +4 June, 1972	Richard Kaady, +29 June, 2001
Georges Mansur, +15 Jn., 1973	Adele Miriam Olivier, +5 June, 2002
Edward Toomey, +29 June, 1976	Ted Haddad, +20 June, 2003
Robert Eassa, +19 June, 1978	Virginia Younes, +26 June, 2003
Robert Elias, +25 June, 1980	Elizabeth Ajalat, +1 June, 2005
John Stanley, +21 June, 1980	Gary G. Murr, +21 June, 2005
John Fadel, +6 June, 1982	George Kirshy, +13 June, 2006
Joseph Latif, +16 June, 1982	Georges Mubarkeh, +21 June, 2006
Adele Khoury, +1 June, 1983	Chris Bullard, +22 June, 2006
Olga Abboud, +18 June, 1983	Khader Abughazaleh, +25 June, 2006

Edward Hanna, +18 June, 1984
 Victoria Azal, +29 June, 1988
 Ralph Khoury, +28 June, 1989
 Angeliki Abughazaleh +June, 1989
 Stella Kovallic, +17 June, 1993
 Jamileh Saadeh, +6 June
 Fuad Aftimos, +23 June, 1993
 Maria Kaady, +27 June, 1993
 Fred G. Aboud, +1 June, 1994
 Georgette D. Hapip, +2 June, 1994
 James Satel, +27 June, 1994
 Abdallah Bitar, +11 June, 1995
 Dan Martin, +1 June, 1996
 Albert Horaney, +2 June, 1996
 Yousseff Zaki, +7 June, 1996
 William Maykay, +11 June, 1996
 Salvador Chala, Sr., +9 June, 1997
 Lillian E. Mittry, +15 June, 1997
 Ramzi Ghantous, +24 June, 1997
 Lamuel Haddad, +12 June, 1997
 Elie Bohamed, +19 June, 1998
 Salwa Abiad, +22 June, 1998

George Marchiano, +2 June, 2007
 Marge Barney, +13 June, 2007
 Dorothy Philips, +12 June, 2008
 Hanna K. Ababseh, +2 June, 2009
 Leonida Reinhold, +18 June, 2009
 Yousef Abughazaleh, +19 June, 2011
 Sohad Cahach, +2 June, 2012
 Margaret Saade, +8 June, 2012
 Connie Gillespie, +16 June, 2012
 Sal Barilla, +27 June, 2012
 Elie Berberi, +11 June, 2013
 Bandaly Azzam, +13 June, 2013
 Jabra Muamar, +13 June, 2013
 Gloria Lambert Kesler, +15 June, 2013
 Gloria Lambert Kesler, +15 June, 2013
 Rita Samara Zabaneh, +12 June, 2014
 Angela Nasr, +27 June, 2014
 Laila Hallak, +14 June, 2015
 Mary Lou Tobey, +18 June, 2015
 Leon Saliba, +3 June, 2017
 Benjamin Coudsy, +15 June, 2017
 Karen Deeb Kouri, +2 June, 2018
 Isabel Horaney, +22 June, 2018

Memory Eternal!

NOTE: Names and dates mentioned above are from our current Office Records. Please inform us of any error and we will correct it.

Note to Coffee Hour hosts: coffee and paper goods will be provided each week.

Holy Bread Offering List

Jun 09 - Salim El-Darzi
 Jun 16 - Pentecost
 Jun 23 - open
 Jun 30 - open
 Jul 07 - open

Coffee Hour Hosts Calendar

Jun 09 - Church School
 Jun 16 - open
 Jun 23 - open
 Jun 30 - open
 Jul 07 - open

Please contact Fr. Timothy (818/219-3761; pastor@stmichaelvannuys.org) to sign-up to offer Holy Bread and Cindy Tamoush at: (818-345-4363; famtam5@socal.rr.com) to sign-up for the Coffee Hour.

LITURGICAL CALENDAR

NOTE: There is no fasting for the forty-day period:
from Easter to the Feast of the Ascension (April 6th)

Feast of the Ascension – Vespereal Liturgy, April 5, 6:30 p.m.

Sunday of the After-Feast of the Ascension

Commemoration of the Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council

Great Vespers – Saturday, June 8th, 3 p.m.

Orthros – Sunday, June 9th, 8:45 a.m., Divine Liturgy, 10 a.m.

The Feast of Pentecost – Sunday, June 16

Great Vespers, Saturday, June 15, 5 p.m.

Orthros – Sunday, June 16th, 8:45 a.m., Divine Liturgy, 10 a.m.

[Note: The week of June 17-21 is a fast free week]

Apostles' Fast - Monday to Friday, June 24-28

Feast of Ss. Peter & Paul - Saturday, June 29

For Planning Ahead

The Great Feast of Pentecost (fifty days after the Feast of the Resurrection) is celebrated this year on Sunday, June 16th. There is no fasting during the week following Pentecost. **The Sunday of All Saints** is celebrated on the Sunday following Pentecost (June 23). From Monday, June 24 to Friday, June 28, we observe **The Fast of the Holy Apostles**. The period of this fast varies from year to year, depending on the date of Easter. The traditional fasting discipline includes: no meat, poultry, eggs, cheese, milk or other dairy products, fish, wine and olive oil on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, with *catalysis* (allowance) for wine and olive oil on Tuesdays and Thursdays (some also permit fish on Tuesdays and Thursdays), and fish, wine and oil on Saturdays and Sundays. The Fast prepares us for the celebration of the **Feast of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul** (June 29), Patrons of the Patriarchate of Antioch. Having rejoiced for the fifty days following Pascha (Easter), the Apostles began to prepare for their departure from Jerusalem to spread Christ's message. According to Holy Tradition, as part of their preparation, they began to fast with prayer to ask God to strengthen their resolve and to be with them in their missionary undertakings.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Arab American Educational Foundation Scholarships

Once again the American Arabic Educational Foundation (AAEF) is awarding scholarships to Southern California students of Arabic heritage. The scholarship requires that the applicant be a graduating high school senior or equivalent, planning to enter either an academic or vocational school the term following the granting of the scholarship. The recipient must also be of Arabic Heritage, and resident of one of the following California Counties: Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, or Ventura. Applicants must also be a citizen or permanent resident of the United States. Applications may also be submitted by college and graduate students. All of the above eligibility and qualifications apply. Applications may be obtained by e-mail in contacting: Fred Milkie, Jr. at <application@aaefscholarship.com> or by downloading it from: <http://www.aaefscholarship.com> Questions may be directed to Fred Milkie, Jr. by phoning him at: 818-535-4243. The applications must be turned in no later than June 14, 2019.

Raies-Murr Educational Trust Scholarship

Only members, in good standing of St. Michael Antiochian Orthodox Church (Van Nuys) or St. Nicholas Antiochian Orthodox Cathedral (Los Angeles) and who have been accepted to or are currently enrolled in a publicly supported (not private) institution of higher learning, including eligible publicly supported vocational, technical and trade schools, are eligible to apply for a Raies-Murr Scholarship. Applications can be obtained by e-mailing Mallory Murr at: <RaiesMurrScholarship@gmail.com>. The applications must be returned by July 8, 2019.

67th Annual Diocesan Parish Life Conference

Host: St. Anthony Church; San Diego, California, July 3-7, 2019

Go to: antiochianevents.com/la.html to register for your hotel room (\$169/night) at the Sheraton Harbor Island and Marina. We have been informed that the hotel is nearly fully booked.

Antiochian Archdiocese Convention - July 21-28, 2019

Host: St. Nicholas Church; Grand Rapids, Michigan

Go to: AC2019gr.org to register for your hotel room, view the Convention schedule and download forms for your registration.

Neighborhood Open Houses

As we continue to celebrate our parish's Fiftieth Year, it is our hope that you will get to know your fellow parishioners in your neighborhood. We have formed a listing of our members in each area of the Los Angeles metropolitan area and are looking for volunteers to host a neighborhood gathering sometime this year. The gatherings are to be informal and to allow for socializing; maximum two (2) hours, i.e., 7-9 p.m. Deserts or refreshments may be considered. Potlucks may also be planned. Gatherings may also take place in a clubhouse or be a park picnic. Hosts will be responsible in contacting parishioners in their neighborhood. We are asking our hosts not to include the church calendar dates of fasting. Should you have any questions or are interested in being a host, please speak with Father Timothy: 818-219-3761 <pastor@stmichaelvannuys.org>.

June "Loaves and Fishes" Food Collection

Water, socks (all ages) packet of wipes, lip balm, diapers, baby wipes, feminine hygiene items, \$5/\$10 gift cards are being collected by Cindy Tamoush up until June 30th.

Mattresses for Camp St. Nicholas

There is an urgent need at Camp St. Nicholas for new, sanitary mattresses. The Camp Committee is hoping to provide approximately 225 mattresses before the start of the upcoming Summer Camp Season. The cost is \$100 per mattress. If you are able to make a donation of one or more mattresses, you may send your check to "St. Nicholas Cathedral," earmarked "mattresses," % Ed Malouf (1021 No. Orchard Drive; Burbank, CA; 91506) or make an on-line donation with your credit card at: <http://www.stnicholasla.com/make-donation> (select: "Camp St. Nicholas"). Questions? Contact Ed Malouf at: 310-923-4347.

Pastor's Sermon
Sunday of the Blind man
by V. Rev. Timothy Baclig
June 2, 2019

Today is the Sunday prior to the Feast of the Ascension, which will be celebrated in our church with an evening Divine Liturgy this Wednesday evening at 6:30 p.m. The eve of the Feast of the Ascension is the conclusion of the festal season of Easter. Each Sunday since Holy Pascha, we have been reading lessons from the Gospel of St. John, beginning with chapter one on the night of Easter.

Today's Gospel lesson is remarkable: The Healing of the Man Born Blind was among the lessons read on the Saturday night of Easter, at the time when Christian catechumen's were baptized. It was chosen for the purpose of focusing upon the themes of the Feast of the Resurrection, namely: washing, illumination, healing, faith, conversion and salvation. The uniqueness of this miracle, chosen among the baptismal lessons is that it highlights Christ's work in unity with the Father as a "new creation." The unusual miracle that dumbfounded many was unique because it is about a man whose choice was not to be blind. He was born blind and the Lord worked a miracle.

All of us, like the blind man in today's lesson, have contemplated at one point in our life: who we are. We have perhaps tried to understand something about what God intends for us to do – why we were born of a particular lineage, have certain predetermined traits, characteristics, dispositions, abilities or disabilities. In all honesty, we don't have all of the answers in this life. We are not God, and may have to consider it a matter of "luck." That is to say, live with the cards that we have been dealt.

In a hymn from last night's service we heard these words: *The blind man thought to himself and said: I wonder if I was born blind due to the sin of my parents? Have I become an example of the faithlessness of the Gentiles? I cannot stop asking: When is the night, when is the day? ...I have never seen the sun shining, nor have I seen my Creator in any form whatsoever. I beseech Thee, O Christ God, to look upon me and have mercy upon me.*

You may recall that in the Gospel last week, the paralytic had been paralyzed for 38 years, sat at the edge of the pool – the pool that... and when the Lord saw him he said, “Do you want to be healed?” At the end of the lesson we are told that on another occasion the Lord found the man at the Temple and admonished him to stop sinning in order that nothing worse would happen to him. In contrast to the lesson we hear today, the paralytic’s illness we understood to be tied and related to sins he committed. This was not the case for the blind man.

Today’s Gospel lesson is found within the full context of a section of St. John’s Gospel where our Lord is teaching in the Jerusalem Temple courts during the Feast of Tabernacles – following the Feast of the Passover. On the final and most important day of the Feast, the Lord boldly declared that **He is the only source of living or life-creating water** (7:37-38); that He is **“the light of the world** (8:12); that He was **sent by the Father** (8:16); **that the Jews who failed to recognize him were not the true descendents of Abraham** (8:39). And then if that was not enough to anger His audience, at the end of chapter eight in St. John’s Gospel, we hear Him state that **“Before Abraham was, I AM”** (8:58). This statement infuriated the Jews that they began stoning him because He used the name of God for Himself; the name of God that was revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai. Upon leaving the Temple, Jesus immediately performs the miracle that demonstrates the truth of all that He claimed to be: He causes a man who was born blind to see, and imparts something even greater: *spiritual sight*.

St. John tells us that “as Jesus passed by, He saw a man that was blind from birth” (v. 1). Note that the man was not brought to Jesus. Nor did the man approach Jesus asking for mercy. It is clear that in this case Jesus took the initiative. The dialogue that follows between the Disciples and Jesus (vs. 2-3), clears up a misconception that was a common superstition of that time: the belief that the man’s blindness was a judgment upon him for the sins of his parents or the result of his own sins.

In first century Palestine, the opinion of certain Epicurean philosophers was very prevalent. The Epicureans believed that the soul had a pre-existence, and that any sins committed in this pre-existent state then descended in an immaterial manner into the body. Jesus, rejected such a belief and clearly stated, **“Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him” (John 9:3).**

The belief of the Epicureans reminds me of some today who enjoy captivating people's attention, going around talking about their own interpretation or superstition of what they believe God's will is; especially when people are in search for answers that are never easy, if even possible to find.

If you or I feel the need or have the desire to pray for someone, we should do just that and never presume to know what God's will is. There are times when things of prayer are best never to be discussed with others. If God motivates you to pray for someone, do that. Don't talk about. Remember your conversation is with God. You and I should never ever presume to know more than we do. One who prays should not go witch hunting. Nor should you or I take upon ourselves burdens which is not ours to carry. You and I are and will be accountable to God for what are our true responsibilities.

In today's lesson the followers of Christ were admonished to make use of the day in working out their salvation, for the *night of their death* will come when they will no longer be able to work. In verses 4 and 5 of today's lesson we hear Jesus say: *I must work the works of Him who sent me, while it is day: the night comes, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.* The Son of God is the light of the world. His work on coming into the world is to enlighten every man (John 1:9). He must do this "while it is day", that is, as long as He is in the world (9:5). The "night comes, when no man can work" is that time when Christ will be delivered up by sinful men who prefer darkness, and He will go away. [Remember that later in the Gospel, at the time of Jesus' betrayal, it was night, and at His crucifixion, "darkness fell over the whole earth" (Luke 23:44).]

Just prior to performing the miracle, the Gospel records that Jesus spat on the ground and made clay of spittle, then anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay (recall Genesis) and sent him to wash in the pool of Siloam. This instruction made by Jesus was not without purpose. First, remember that Jesus had been at the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem. Part of that feast involved bringing a large urn of water from Siloam on the first seven days – but not the eighth day, for the rites of purification. These rites were a figure of the true purification, which is in Christ. St. John Chrysostom comments that Jesus intended to prove that He was not estranged from the Law and Old Covenant. Further, the significance of using water from Siloam was to commemorate the Hebrews wandering in the desert when water miraculously came out of the rock of Horeb, when by God's command, it was struck by Moses (Exodus 17:1-6).

The remainder of St. John's Gospel speaks of the blind man's spiritual healing. This part of the miracle can be best summarized by the church's Wednesday morning ode of the canon: *When Thou didst open the eyes of him who could not see the perceptible light, Thou didst enlighten the eyes of his soul as well. Thou didst move him to glorify thee, for he had come to know Thee as the Creator, who out of compassion did appear as a mortal man.* The blind man goes from his knowledge of experiencing the physical miracle to a complete conviction about Jesus as the divine Son of God.

What follows is poetically described further in last Monday's morning hymn: *Blindness [came upon] those who supposedly had eyes that saw, for darkness seized their minds and souls and enshrouded their thoughts when they beheld the man who was blind regain [his] sight.* The Apostle Paul quotes the Law and the Prophets in writing the Romans to describe God's own doing. He first quotes Deuteronomy 29:4 and Isaiah 29:10 – *God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes so that they could not see and ears so that they could not hear, to this very day.* And then quoting David's prophesy: *May their eyes be darkened so they cannot see, and their backs be bent forever (Psalm 69:22, 23).* This, the Apostle goes on to say was accomplished by God in order that those who were not Jews would be saved (Romans 11:11), and also that those who considered themselves "chosen" might be made envious.

The dialogue heard between the blind man and the Pharisees that follows, not only confirm the healing. What happens is that the blind man affirms his faith and conviction in declaring that the One who gave him sight does the will of God and did something never done before: "He opened the eyes of one born blind" (vs. 30-32). He has "to be of God" (v. 33).

In conclusion, we have heard about a man whose choice was not to be blind. He was born blind and the Lord healed him dumbfounding many, some who willfully chose to be blind; those who could not accept the truth, having great difficulty with what they witnessed and heard. Their minds rejected what is difficult for them to acknowledge. Third, and perhaps, the most shocking of all, we heard about God who prevented some from seeing and understanding. For it was God's purpose that those who were perceived as the ones condemned and outside of the promise would not be excluded but those who were "chosen" and ultimately saved.

Prayer

O Christ our God, who by Thy pure touch did lighten the eyes of the man born blind, illumine our souls eyes making us sons of the day amidst a world of darkness. Illumine our hearts, O Master who loves mankind, with the pure light of Thy divine knowledge, and open the eyes of our mind to understand and to practice your message of forgiveness that has been at the heart of this Paschal season. Implant in us also the fear of Thy blessed commandments, that trampling down all fleshly desires, we man enter upon a spiritual manner of living, both thinking and doing such things as are well pleasing unto Thee. For Thou art the Illumination of our souls and bodies, O Christ our God, and unto Thee we ascribe glory, together with Thine unoriginate Father and Thine all-holy and good and life-giving Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. A-men.

EOTHINON 8
الايوثينا 8

TONE 5
اللحن 5

SIXTH SUNDAY OF PASCHA

COMMEMORATION OF THE BLIND MAN

NIKEPHOROS THE CONFESSOR, ARCHBISHOP OF CONSTANTINOPLE;
NEW-MARTYRS DEMETRIOS OF PHILADELPHIA, JOHN OF TREBIZOND,
AND CONSTANTINE OF ATHOS

طروبارية القيامة على اللحن الخامس
لنسبح نحن المؤمنين ونسجد للكلمة، المساوي للآب والروح في الأزلية وعدم الابتداء،
المولود من العذراء لخلصنا، لأنه سرّ أن يصعد بالجسد على الصليب ويحمل الموت،
وينهض الموتى بقيامته المجيدة

طروبارية رؤساء الملائكة باللحن الرابع
أيها المتقدمون على الأجناد السماويين، نتوسل إليكم نحن غير المستحقين، حتى أنكم
بطلباتكم تكتنوفوننا بظل أجنحة مجدكم غير الهولي، حافظين إيانا نحن الجاثين
والصارخين بغير فتور، أنقذونا من الشدائد، بما أنكم رؤساء مراتب القوات العلوية.

قنداق القيامة على اللحن الثامن

ولئن نزلت إلى القبر يا من لا يموت، إلا أنك درست قوة الجحيم، وقمت غالباً، أيها المسيح الإله. وللنسوة الحاملات الطيب قلت أفرحن واهباً لرسلك السلام يا مانح الواقعين القيام.

الرسالة

أنت يا رب تحفظنا وتسترنا من هذا الجيل، خلصني يا رب فإن البار قد فني
فصل من أعمال الرسل القديسين الأطهار

في تلك الأيام، فيما نحن الرسل ذاهبون إلى الصلاة، صادفتنا جارية بها روح عرافٍ، وكانت تجني من عرافتها مالاً كثيراً لأسيادها، فأخذت تسير في إثر بولس وإثرنا، وهي تصيح: "هؤلاء الرجال عبيد الله العلي، يبشرونكم بطريق الخلاص!" وفعلت ذلك عدة أيام حتى غضب بولس، فالتفت وقال للروح: "أمرك باسم يسوع المسيح أن تخرج منها." فخرج من وقته. فلما رأى سادتها ضياع أملهم من كسب المال، قبضوا على بولس وسيلا وجروهما إلى ساحة المدينة لدى القضاة، وقدموهما إلى الحكام وقالوا: "هذان الرجلان يُثيران الاضطراب في مدينتنا. وهما يهوديان، يدعوان إلى سنن لا يحل لنا قبولها أو العمل بها، لأننا رومانيون." فثار الجميع عليهما، ومزق الحكام ثياب بولس وسيلا وأمروا بجلدِهما. فأوسعوهما ضرباً وألقوهما في السجن، وأوصوا السجن أن يُشدَّ الحراسة عليهما. فلما تلقى السجن هذا الأمر، طرحهما في أعماق السجن، وشدَّ أرجلهما بالمقطرة. وعند نصف الليل كان بولس وسيلا يُصليان ويسبحان الله، والسجناء يُصغون إليهما، فوقع فجأة زلزالٌ عنيفٌ هزَّ أركانَ السجن، وللحال انفتحت الأبواب كلها، وانفكت قيودُ السجناء كلهم. فأفاق السجناء من نومهم، فرأى أبواب السجن مفتوحةً، فظنَّ أن السجناء هربوا. فاستلَّ سيفه ليقتل نفسه، فناداه بولس بأعلى صوته: "لا تمس نفسك بسوء، فنحن كلنا هنا!" فطلب مصباحاً، واندفع إلى داخل السجن، وارتقى مرتعداً على أقدام بولس. ثم أخرجهما وقال: "يا سيدي، ماذا يجب علي أن أعمل لأنال الخلاص؟" فقالا له: "آمن بالرب يسوع المسيح تنال الخلاص أنت وأهل بيتك." وبشراه وجميع أهل بيته بكلام الرب. فأخذهما في تلك الساعة من الليل وغسل جراحهما، ومن وقته اعتمد هو وجميع أهل بيته. ثم صعد بهما إلى بيته، فوضع لهما مائدةً، وفرح هو وأهل بيته، لأنه آمن بالرب.

الإنجيل

فصلٌ شريفٌ من بشارَةِ القديسِ يوحنا

في ذلك الزمان، بينما يسوع سائر، رأى أعمى منذ مولده. فسأله تلاميذه: "يا معلم، من أخطأ؟ أهذا الرجل أم والداه، حتى ولد أعمى؟" فأجاب يسوع: "لا هذا أخطأ ولا والداه، لكنه ولد أعمى حتى تظهر فيه أعمال الله. علينا، ما دام النهار، أن نعمل أعمال الذي أرسلني. الليل آتٍ، ولا يقدر أحد أن يعمل فيه. ما دمت في العالم فأنا نور العالم. قال هذا وتقل في التراب، وجبل من تقاله طينا، وطلّى به عيني الأعمى وقال له: "إذهب واغتسل في بركة سلوام (أي الرسول)، فذهب واغتسل فعاد بصيرا. فتساءل الجيران والذين عرفوه متسولا من قبل: "أما هو الذي كان يقعد ليستعطي؟" وقال غيرهم: "هذا هو." وقال آخرون: "لا، بل يشبهه!" وكان الرجل نفسه يقول: "أنا هو!" فقالوا له: "كيف انفتحت عينك؟" فأجاب: "هذا الرجل الذي اسمه يسوع جبل طينا، وطلّى عيني وقال لي: اذهب واغتسل في بركة سلوام. فذهبت واغتسلت، فأبصرت." فقالوا له: "أين هو؟" قال: "لا أدري." فأخذوا الرجل الذي كان أعمى إلى الفريسيين، وكان اليوم الذي جبل فيه يسوع الطين وفتح عيني الأعمى يوم سبت. فسأله الفريسيون أيضا كيف أبصرت، فأجابهم: "طلّى عيني بالطين، فلما اغتسلت أبصرت." فقال بعض الفريسيين: "هذا الرجل ليس من الله، لانه لا يراعي السبت." قال آخرون: "كيف يستطيع خاطئ أن يعمل مثل هذه الأعمال؟" فوقع الخلاف بينهم. وقالوا أيضا للأعمى: "أنت تقول إنه فتح عينيك، فماذا تقول فيه؟" فأجاب: "إنه نبي!" فلم يصدق اليهود أن الرجل كان أعمى فأبصر، فاستدعوا والديه وسألوهما: "أهذا هو ابنكما الذي ولد أعمى كما تقولان؟ فكيف يبصر الآن؟" فأجاب والداه: "نحن نعلم يقينا أن هذا ابننا، وأنه ولد أعمى. أما كيف يبصر الآن، فلا نعلم، ولا نعرف من فتح عينيه، أسألوه وهو يجيبكم عن نفسه، لانه بلغ سن الرشد." قال والداه هذا لخوفهما من اليهود، لان هؤلاء اتفقوا على أن يطردوا من المجمع كل من يعترف بأن يسوع هو المسيح. لذلك قال والداه: "اسألوه لانه بلغ سن الرشد." وعاد الفريسيون فدعوا الرجل الذي كان أعمى وقالوا له: "مجد الله! نحن نعرف أن هذا الرجل خاطئ." فأجاب: "أنا لا أعرف إن كان خاطئا، ولكنني أعرف أنني كنت أعمى وأنا الآن أبصر." فقالوا له: "ماذا صنع لك؟ وكيف فتح عينيك؟" أجابهم: "قلت لكم ولم تسمعوا لي، فلماذا تريدون أن تسمعوه ثانية؟ أتريدون أنتم أيضا أن تصيروا تلاميذه؟" فشتموه، وقالوا له: "أنت تلميذه، أما نحن فتلاميذ موسى. نحن نعرف أن الله كلم موسى، أما هذا فلا نعرف من أين هو؟" فأجابهم الرجل: "عجبا كيف يفتح عيني ولا تعرفون من أين هو؟ نحن نعلم أن الله لا يستجيب للخاطئين. بل لمن يخافه ويعمل بمشيئته. ولم يسمع أحد يوما أن إنسانا فتح عيني من ولد أعمى. ولو لم يكن هذا

الرجل من الله، لما قدر أن يعمل شيئاً. " فقالوا له: "أتعلمنا وأنت قد ولدت كلك في الخطيئة؟" ثم طردوه. فسمع يسوع أنهم طردوه، فلقيه وقال له: "أتؤمن أنت بابن الله؟" أجاب: "ومن هو، يا سيدي، حتى أوّمن به!" فقال له يسوع: "أنت رأيتته وهو الذي يكلمك!" قال: "أوّمن يا رب!" وسجد له.

ملاحظة بخصوص تناول القربان المقدس

إن مفهومنا لتناول القربان يعنى عمومية المشاركة فيه لذوى العقيدة الواحدة، الا إن المشاركة في سر القربان المقدس هنا مقتصر فقط على أعضاء الكنائس الارثوذكسية والذين يحضرون أنفسهم بالصلاة والصوم والاعتراف منذ فترة قريبة (وعلى كل حال، فإننا ندعو الجميع للمشاركة في الخبز المقدس الذى يوزع عند إنتهاء مراسيم القداس). رجاء مراجعة الكاهن. إذا رغبت أن تصبح عضواً في الكنيسة الارثوذكسية.