

HOLY TRINITY

ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH



723 N BODINE ST PHILADELPHIA, PA 19123

CHURCH BULLETIN

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The 7th Sunday after Pentecost

Gospel Reading Matthew 9: 27 - 35



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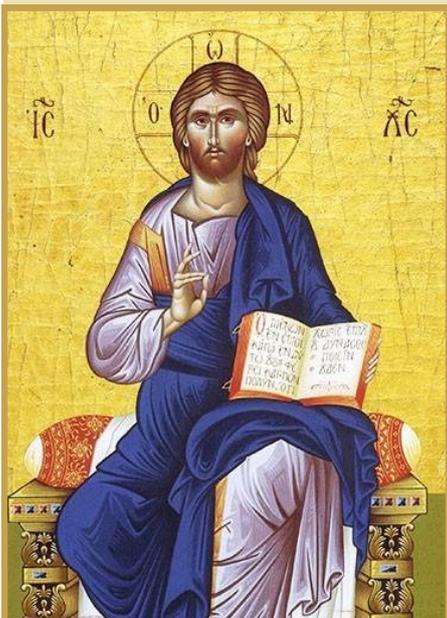
At that time, as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed him, crying aloud, "Have mercy on us, Son of David." When he entered the house, the blind men came to him; and Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to him, "Yes, Lord." Then he touched their eyes, saying, "According to your faith be it done to you." And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly charged them, "See that no one knows it." But they went away and spread his fame through all

that district. As they were going away, behold, a dumb demoniac was brought to him. And when the demon had been cast out, the dumb man spoke; and the crowds marveled, saying, "Never was anything like this seen in Israel." But the Pharisees said, "He casts out demons by the prince of demons." And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every infirmity among the people.

Apostle Reading Romans 15: 1 - 6

Brethren, we who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves; let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to edify him. For Christ did not please himself; but, as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached thee fell on me." For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that by steadfastness and by the

encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope. May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of your Lord Jesus Christ. Welcome one another, therefore, as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.



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Synaxarion Sunday July 26, 2020 (Seventh Sunday after Pentecost): Holy Hieromartyr Hermolaus; Holy Venerable Martyr Paraskevi of Rome; Holy Venerable Ioanichie the New of Muscel

The Healing of the Two Blind Man

We witness through the Gospel today the healing of two blind men, and through this life-changing encounter Christ's power as God is in full evidence. Responding to their plea for mercy, the God of mercy, Jesus Christ, receives the two blind men into His presence and He heals them. But Jesus doesn't perform this great miracle randomly. Rather, like the healing of the paralytic last week, we're taught a lesson in faith and healing that's also applicable to our own need for Christ.

Sometimes we assume that it's God whose withholding growth or healing from us. But what we learn over and over again through the witness of the Scriptures and the lives of the Saints is that it's we who have to be ready and willing to accept God's healing, to get ourselves into Christ's near presence, to have the faith to present ourselves to Him for the healing we need, to persevere in prayer and the Sacramental life, in humility and obedience before Christ and the Church.

Summing up St. John Chrysostom on this topic, he instructs us that Christ doesn't run after those in need of healing everywhere, lest anyone think He's healing out of vainglory. No, there's more at work here: Christ's healing presupposes a participation, a cooperation, from those who need healing. Just as our relationship and communion with Christ God necessitates a participation on our part, a return of love, an act of repentance, an abandonment of self-will. Our healing bespeaks a reciprocal relationship as well.

In fact, in most of the healings we see in the Gospels, those in need of healing must personally seek out that healing from Christ. In other words, they desire that healing and change in their life; they desire Christ's touch to cleanse them from their sins. What we witness over and over is that their desire is strong enough to seek Christ out singlemindedly, to entrust themselves to Him, to humbly acknowledge their need for Him; they desire healing enough to step forward in faith, recognizing that Christ God is worthy of trust, that He alone is the Great Physician of our souls and bodies.

We see this humility and single-mindedness exhibited by the two blind men; they seek Jesus out, they follow Him, they cry out to Him, "Son of David, have mercy on us!"



These two men know the Source of mercy—and that God alone can show them such mercy, such miraculous healing.

To test their faith further, Jesus asks them even after such a demonstration of faith and humility, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" And they say to Him, "Yes, Lord." But note what Christ says in response, "According to your faith, let it be to you." Christ's question has a way of making their faith even stronger, even more apparent, even more of a witness through which God can work, but there's no mistaking it—their faith plays a key role in their healing.

Do you see the involvement of their souls here, the relationship which Christ God develops between them and Him? Their volition, their will, was to be healed of their physical infirmity, their blindness, but it demanded 'eyes' of faith and strength of soul.

Even still, not everyone receives physical healing. It remains a mystery. To some, like St. Paul, who petitioned God to remove the "thorn in his flesh," God's response was, "My grace is sufficient for you for My power is made perfect in weakness" (II Cor. 12). In other words, there was something about that 'thorn' that St. Paul 'needed' if he was to trust in God for his strength, to be humble before Him, to serve God to the amazing extent he did, converting whole nations to the truth of God and His salvation.

While our physical healing necessarily involves our will, our souls, the inverse is also true: the spiritual healing of our souls involves our bodies, our participation, our presentation of ourselves before God in daily prayer, our getting ourselves and families to the divine services, regular Confession, proper preparation for the Eucharist, participation in the fasts, so that the ascetic disciplines of the Faith can work noetically in our souls for our deification, healing, salvation.

When it comes to healing our eternal souls, we know that God desires this above all else. The truth is that all of us are to one degree or another sin-sick, that is, we're 'works in progress;' as St. Paul says, we must "work out our salvation with fear and trembling," (Phil. 2:12). If we're to grow in our relationship and communion with God,

be deified, and find spiritual healing, we need to have the eyes of faith to see where our spiritual blindness still lies.

And God gives us a sure and prescribed path for our healing, growth, and salvation through His Church: He teaches us how to pray and fast, and so, we pray daily the prayers of the Church and follow the fasting prescriptions as closely as we can. He gives us Confession as a means to find freedom from our passions; we do not neglect the opportunities given us to participate in the divinely-inspired cooperate worship of the Church, assured as we are through the Scriptures and the witness of the Church that this worship is deifying for our souls; we prepare with humility and obedience to receive the Eucharist and never with a spirit of presumption, so that through all these 'tools' we may progress in our knowledge and love of God, our healing, and our salvation.

This progress in the knowledge and love of God is meant to be active, never 'static,' never status quo. To be deified, we cannot be 'couch potato' or 'arm chair' Christians. It's easy to fall into a rut, preferring our own opinions and ways to those of the Church, listening to the culture instead of Christ, taking Orthodoxy on our terms or giving up the spiritual battle, but that isn't Christianity and it won't bring us the healing and growth in the Kingdom that you and I need.

The prayers for reception of the Eucharist presuppose Confession and its purification as a preparation for worthily receiving Christ's precious and holy Body and Blood. Likewise, it's necessary that we physically fast from food before receiving the Gifts. And so through all of this, we see that our healing in soul demands something of our material bodies in our turning to Christ God just as the blind men did, crying out, "Lord, have mercy on us."

Our ongoing willingness to be healed, to progress in our healing, is an integral part of our salvation. We're saved through our faith that manifests itself thru our actions and deeds, the living out of that faith, the pushing of ourselves to live for Christ and prioritize the life in Him above all else. Why? Because what else is that important? We can't afford to lay aside our struggle with sin and our obedience to what Christ teaches us through His Church. Christ asks the blind men, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" We've been shown the way if we would just make use of it.

So, may we each cultivate the attitude of soul and body to follow Christ with all that we have, all that we are, crying out to Him for healing as did the blind men, "Lord, have mercy on us," knowing that Christ is the Lord who loves us and indeed is the One who has mercy on our souls.

Fr. Robert Miclean

HOLY TRINITY'S Liturgical Schedule from July 26 to August 2, 2020

Sunday July 26 (Seventh Sunday af- ter Pentecost):

9:00 am - Matins

10:00 am - Holy Liturgy

12:00 pm - Coffee hour

Friday July 31:

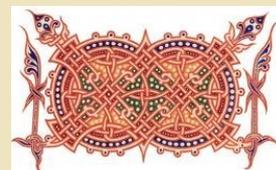
Dormition Fast begins

Sunday August 2 (Eighth Sunday after Pentecost):

9:00 am - Matins

10:00 am - Holy Liturgy

12:00 pm - Coffee Hour



According to Your Faith ...

This week's Gospel lesson, for the seventh Sunday after Pentecost, is taken from St. Matthew (9:27-35). It is a brief passage that recounts two separate healings. The first is the healing of two blind men and the second is of person who was mute on account of a demon.

Prior to this event, in St. Matthew's account, the Lord had raised Jairus' daughter from the dead (Matthew 9:18-26). After which he continued traveling and teaching throughout the area. It was then that two blind men approach him, crying loudly, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!" (v. 27) There are three things we should take note of in this encounter. First, they are very open about their need. Second, they don't ask for a healing outright, but they as for "mercy." And third, they call him by the Messianic title: "Son of David."

When they had entered into a house, the Lord asks them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" (v. 28) They respond, "Yes, Lord." Then Jesus says, "According to your faith let it be done to you." (v. 29) Jesus doesn't heal them out in the open where there are crowds and the healing could become a spectacle. Rather, like with the raising of Jairus' daughter, he does this privately.

He also begins to lead them to a higher understanding of who he is when he asks them whether they believe that he can do this. Jesus doesn't ask if they believe that He will pray to his Father for this to be done, but rather, "Do you believe that I am able to do this." This time they respond not with the Messianic title "Son of David," but with, "Yes, Lord." In this small turn of phrase, they acknowledge that this is the Son of God who is standing before them.

When he heals them he says, "According to your faith let it be done to you." He often grants a healing with a similar expression. There are two reasons. One is that he doesn't want to appear as though he is "rushing" to heal people, looking for self-glorification. The other is that he wants the person to confess their faith aloud, to show that they are participants in the good work done them. So, he doesn't say, "Let your eyes be opened," but rather, "According to your faith."

He charges them to tell no one of what has happened, but, as you might imagine, it is impossible for a wonder such as this to be kept a secret (v. 30-31). These men became preachers and evangelist for the Lord.



When the blind men had left the house, people then brought a mute man (a person who could not speak), and was possessed by a demon, before Him. In this case, the Lord asks nothing of him, but immediately casts out the demon and the man began speaking.

St. John Chrysostom informs our understanding by carefully pointing out that this man's inability to speak was not a "natural," or physiological condition, but rather the result of the evil spirit afflicting him. This man was unable to seek out the Lord himself, so others brought him to Jesus. St. Matthew says that when the man spoke, "The crowds were amazed and said, 'Never has anything like this been seen in Israel'" (v. 33).

This Gospel reading ends with the comment of the Pharisees who had witnessed this miracle, yet still trying to refute it: "By the ruler of demons he casts out the demons" (v. 34). In another place the Lord answers this charge when he says, "If a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand," (Mark 3:25) showing how illogical it is to suggest that a demon would seek to destroy another demon. Moreover, the Lord did not just cast out demons, He did many other signs and wonders, cleansing lepers, raising the dead, and preaching the Kingdom.

In the response of the Pharisees, we see an all too familiar pattern of rejecting the love and mercy of God. What causes a person to deny the good work that they see with their own eyes? Even more than that, why would someone attribute the good that is done to the devil? This is what is meant by the Lord when he says that every sin will be forgiven except blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (cf. Luke 12:10). To call that which is good evil is to deny even the possibility of God's action among us. It is to deny the very essence of who He is.

Simply stated, this passage teaches us that we are all called to recognize the goodness of God, to not be afraid or shy to ask for His help, and to openly declare to others the loving kindness and mercy He has show us.

Fr. Nicholas Apostola

