



# HOLY TRINITY

## ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH



723 N BODINE ST PHILADELPHIA, PA 19123

# CHURCH BULLETIN

Vol. 14 Issue 4 \* Sunday, January 24, 2021 \* Editor: V. Rev. Fr. Nicolai BUGA

## The 31<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

### Gospel Reading **Luke 18: 35-43**

*At that time,* as Jesus was drew near to Jericho, a certain blind man was sitting by the roadside begging; and hearing a multitude passing by, he asked what it meant. So they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. And he cried out, saying, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Then those who were in front rebuked him and told him to be quiet; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be brought to Him. And when he had come near, He asked him, Saying, "What do you want Me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, that I may receive my sight." Then Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well." And immediately he received his sight, and followed Him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.

### Apostle Reading **1 Timothy 1: 15-17**

*Brethren,* this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all

long-suffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.



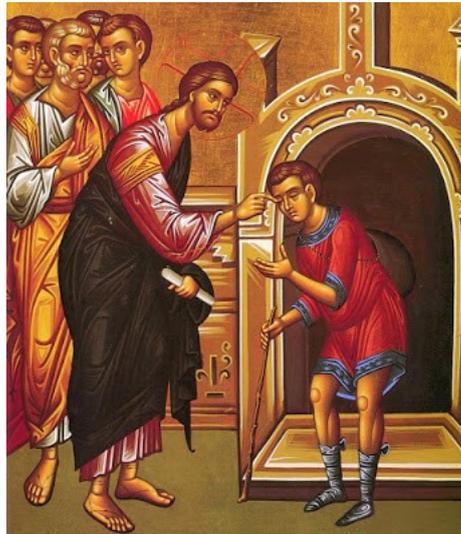
#### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Gospel & Apostle Readings	1
Apostle Reading	1
Fr. Philip LeMasters: The Blind Beggar Receives His Sight	2-3
Liturgical Schedule from January 24 to February 2, 2021	3
Fr. Nicholas Apostola: Lord, Let Me See Again	4

## Synaxarion. Sunday January 24, 2021: Holy Venerable Xenia of Rome; Saint Xenia of Sankt Petersburg

## The Blind Beggar Receives His Sight

We have probably all had moments in our lives when we couldn't see very well. Maybe the power went out at night at home, our eyes took a while to adjust after walking out of movie theater, we lost our glasses, or we were headed east or west at just the right time to be blinded by the light of the sun. Unfortunately, we have also had moments when we have been blind in other ways when our actions, words, and thoughts went against God's purposes for our lives. In fact, it's an ongoing struggle to have a clear take on how what we do each day impacts our souls, as well as our neighbors in whom we encounter the Lord.



Of course, the man knew a portion of the truth. He knew that Jesus was the Son of David, the Messiah, Who could miraculously restore his sight. He had enough faith, enough trust in Christ, to ask for that. His plea for mercy sounds like an early version of the Jesus Prayer. But the man did not know that Jesus Christ is truly the Son of God. Like the rest of the Jews, he was probably waiting for a Messiah who would be a great political and religious leader, not a Savior Who is both God and man. Fortunately for him and the rest of us, Christ is not a stern master who has mercy only on those with perfect understanding. He heard the man's humble plea and restored his sight; then the man gave thanks to God and began to follow the Lord.

St. Paul reminded the Ephesians that they had come out of the darkness of paganism and immorality by putting on Christ in baptism and the life of His body, the Church. Instead of returning to the shadowy ways of the world, he called them to turn on the lights, see the truth about themselves, and live accordingly. "Awake from sleep, rise from the dead, and Christ will give you light," he tells them. It's not a time to be in a drunken stupor or to be lulled into complacency in any other way, but instead to be alert and focused so that we won't be lulled back into the darkness.

Our Savior, in His earthly ministry, certainly healed many blind people. We read in today's gospel text of a blind beggar who was so eager to see that he would not stop yelling out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" as the Lord passed by. Even though others told the man to be quiet and not to cause a scene, he continued to plead for healing. He succeeded in getting Christ's attention, and He asked the man a simple question: "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man responded, "Lord, that I may receive my sight." Christ said, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well." Immediately he could see again and began to follow the Lord and to glorify God.

Unlike the Gentiles we mentioned earlier, this fellow was Jewish and waiting for a Messiah to fulfill God's promises to Israel. But he was not able to see the Savior as He passed by. His eyes were shut to the Lord and to all the beauty of the creation. He lived in darkness. He was poor and wretched, a beggar, who could do nothing but call out for help from the Son of David, a common name for "the anointed one" whom the Jews expected. And the man's sufferings had made quite clear to him what he wanted: to be able to see, for he was tired of living in darkness. When the blind man had his chance, he took it—refusing to shut up when he heard that Christ was passing his way.

Jesus Christ came to bring us all into the light of His life, regardless of whether we are Gentiles or Jews and no matter how we have lived or what we have done. Just as a blind person could only beg and pray for a miracle in that time and place, we cannot force or earn our way into the blessed life of the Kingdom. We all need His mercy. But like both the blind man and the Ephesians, we have to do our part to become receptive to the light of Christ in our lives.

A person who keeps his eyes closed will never see the day or the beauty of the world. Likewise, it is impossible for those who insist on filling their lives with darkness to receive the light of Christ. If we are asleep, we are not awake. If we insist on living in the shadows, we will never see clearly.

The good news is that we have already open our eyes to the light, for we have put on Christ in the waters of baptism, been sealed with the Holy Spirit in chrismation, and nourished with the Body and Blood of the Lord in the Eucharist. Our eyes have been opened to behold the glory of the Lord. We have entered into His house, the Church, and confessed Him in the words of the Creed and in our hearts. Indeed, we know that we are able at any moment of the day to show the humble faith of the blind beggar through the words of the Jesus Prayer.

Nonetheless, our spiritual vision is still obscured by a measure of darkness. We still look at other people with self-righteous judgment, envy, lust, and other bad attitudes. We make hateful, profane, and other unedifying comments that make faithfulness harder for ourselves and other people. We drift off to spiritual sleep thinking that we will find fulfillment in pleasure, possessions, and the praise of others. We are lured powerfully back to the darkness in many ways. So we continue to need therapy to help us keep our eyes open to the brilliant light of Christ, to the salvation that He has brought to the world.

That's why it's good that we have seasons like Advent to wake us up from our slumbers, to switch on the lights and tell us it's time to wake up. All of us need to gain strength in resisting our self-centered desires by fasting or some other form of self-denial. All of us need to place greater focus on prayer. All of us need to confess our sins and turn away from them through repentance. All of us need to give alms and become more generous to the needy with our time and resources. All of us need to love and forgive our enemies. In these ways, we all need to open our lives more fully to the light of Christ.

At the same time, we also need to do everything that we can to shut out the darkness that so easily overtakes us. Most of us probably do not have to look very closely at our lives to identify habits, weaknesses, relationships, or social settings that can dim the spiritual light pretty quickly. We have to be prudent and persistent in discerning how to respond to those temptations, but it's not our intelligence or will power that is our hope. It's the mercy of the Lord, the same One who responded to the plea of that blind beggar. So when we are tempted to wallow in the darkness, we need to follow his example of calling out to Christ persistently with humility, asking for His forgiveness and healing. That fellow would not shut up even when his pleas disturbed others, and we must learn not to abandon our spiritual disciplines, mindfulness, and prayers even when our thoughts, feelings, and friends want to lead us away from the light.

Sometimes we feel like it will kill us to resist certain temptations. Of course, that's not true, but it is often how we feel. We all need to cultivate the faith that Christ comes to heal and strengthen us, not to frustrate and destroy us. The disciplines of fasting are not about legalism or causing inconvenience. Instead, they are tools for our healing, ways for us to turn away from the darkness and to walk in the light, into a life where we are not the slaves of sin but embrace joyfully the glorious freedom of the children of God.

No matter where we are in our journey to the Kingdom, we can all welcome the light of Christ more fully into our lives in the coming weeks. No matter our measure of spiritual health or disease, we can open ourselves more fully to the mercy and healing of the Lord. He made a blind beggar see and turned idol-worshipping pagans into saints. And He will do the same for us, if we will only stay focused on Him and turn away from the many distractions that blind us to His truth. As we prepare for Christmas, let's do everything that we can to walk in the light of the Lord.

**Fr. Philip LeMasters**



## **HOLY TRINITY'S Liturgical Schedule from January 24 to February 2, 2021**

### **Sunday January 24 (31<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Pentecost):**

9:00 am - Matins  
10:00 am - Divine Liturgy  
11:00 am - Sunday School  
12:30 pm - Parish General  
Annual Assembly  
1:30 pm - Coffee hour

### **Saturday January 30 - Holy Three Hierarchs:**

9:00 am - Matins  
10:00 am - Divine Liturgy  
11:30 pm - Coffee hour

### **Sunday January 31 (32<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost):**

9:00 am - Matins  
10:00 am - Divine Liturgy  
11:00 pm - Sunday School  
12:00 pm - Coffee hour

### **Tuesday February 2 - The Presentation of Our Lord and Savior in the Temple:**

9:00 am - Matins  
10:00 am - Holy Liturgy  
11:30 pm - Coffee hour



## Lord, Let Me See Again

This week's Gospel reading, taken from Luke 18:32-43, is the account of Jesus' restoring the sight of a blind man from Jericho. There are two other versions of this same miracle in the Scripture: Matthew 20:19-34 and Mark 10:46-52. All three Evangelists place this healing just before the Lord's Entry into Jerusalem. It is a prelude to the Passion.

Jesus enters Jericho and there is a commotion as he passes. A blind man is sitting on the side of the road begging; a common occurrence in those days. The first thing that we notice in this story is that once the blind man has been told who is passing by — Jesus of Nazareth — he immediately begins to cry out: "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" (v. 38) I have explained in prior homilies the significance of that title. To call him "Son of David" is to acknowledge him as the Messiah. Certainly the blind man (who we know through St. Mark's account was named Bartimæus) had heard about Jesus, and the other miracles he had performed. For Bartimæus this was the moment he had hoped for: a chance to have his sight restored.

You can imagine the scene. Jesus is passing by. There is a crowd of people, each one for their own reason wanting to see this man about whom so much had been said. The able-bodied and sighted people are ignoring the poor, ill-clad and blind beggar. Suddenly, Bartimæus decides that he is not going to simply melt into the pavement, but is going to assert himself. "Those who were in front sternly ordered him to be quiet; but he shouted even more loudly, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!'" (v. 39)

St. John Chrysostom, in reflecting on the blind man's request, tells us to "learn that though we be very vile and outcast, if we approach God with earnestness ... we shall be able to receive whatever we might ask." He goes on to say that even if we are hindered or discouraged, we should persist. Even if we do not receive what we ask from God immediately, we should not tire. And so, he



urges us to emulate this man in his fervor and devotion.

When he hears the man's pleading, Jesus stops and asks that he be brought before him. Unlike in other similar situations, Jesus does not ask the man if he believes, but asks, simply, "What do you want me to do for you?" (v. 41) There is a very practical reason for Jesus to put the question in this way. He wants the man to tell him what his request is, and he also wants everyone else to know that Jesus is giving him what he is requesting. The man answers, "Lord, let me see again." The Lord says to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has saved you." (v. 41)

We are able to see the man's gratitude in the fact that once he had regained his sight he "followed him, glorifying God." (v. 43) Like the Samaritan leper who was healed and returned to give thanks to Jesus, this man gives similar evidence of his faith.

St. Luke offers us an even more subtle lesson. I mentioned that each of the three Evangelists who recount this miracle place it just before Jesus' Entry into Jerusalem. In the verses preceding this healing, St. Luke tells us that Jesus took the twelve disciples aside and told them of what was going to happen in Jerusalem. "But they understood nothing about these things; in fact, what he said was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what he said." (v. 34) In pointing this out, St. Luke gives us a parallel: there is more than one kind of blindness. Bartimæus may have been physically blind, but the disciples were spiritually blind. As Jesus healed Bartimæus, so too he would heal the disciples so that they could see, and then believe.

**Fr. Nicholas Apostola**

