



My Beloved Ones,

Χριστός ἀνέστη!
Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!

This Sunday's Gospel is another of our Lord's miracles: the healing of the blind man. As St. John tells us that this man was born without eyes. Imagine such a life: being unable to see the sun, the moon, stars—or even our loved ones.

Often when something bad happens to us, we attempt to find a reason. “What have I done wrong?” “Who is responsible that that this has happened to me?” Many times, people blame God for allowing a misfortune to take place. And so when our Disciples encounter the blind man (who, as we shall later see, is well known to the inhabitants of the town as a beggar), they ask their Teacher, our Lord, “*Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was*

born blind?” (John 9:2) According to our limited human understanding, this question would seem to be a crucial one, but our Lord answers, “*It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him*” (John 9:3).

The blind man has also proven himself to be able to take his pain and his disability, living his life in virtuous patience, without blaming anyone. Our Lord exhibits this very same patience in receiving our sins, not simply during His Crucifixion and Passion, but even in today's society, when we fail to recognize and live by His Word. Our ever-patient Lord, seeing the like patience of the blind man is moved. He wants the man to see the beauty of this universe our God has created.

Taking His spittle and making clay from dust, Jesus anoints the man's eyes and tells him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam, to demonstrate the miracle to the people. St. John Chrysostom naturally draws the comparison that, just as God created Adam and Eve from His Divine breath and the dust of earth, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity gives sight and new life to the blind man in the same way.

The Grace of our Lord is surely responsible for the healing of the Blind Man, but equally as necessary is the synergy of the man himself, for all human beings have free will. God has power over all things, but we, of all His Creation, are unique: He wants us to *choose* to work together with Him.

After the miracle, the blind man's problems are far from ended. On one side, his neighbors do not believe that this is the same man born blind. On the other side, the Pharisees and authorities wish to interrogate the man, and to use his own words against Christ, whom they hate. However, the man still shows his characteristic patience, defending the ministry of Jesus as coming from God.

Though the man is cast out from the synagogue, Jesus approaches him, asking, “Do you believe in the Son of man?” 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. (John 9:35-38) Indeed, it is a wonderful thing that this man is at peace, having been given His vision, and having met the Creator of all.

Like this man, we (and those in every century and era) can truly meet Jesus Christ, but it is up to us if we are to be personally connected with Him. This is what matters to God: if we are going to use the gift of our free will to remain separated from Him, or to live close to Him forever.

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+ALEXIOS
Metropolitan of Atlanta