

GOSPEL OF JOHN 9A (9:1-6)

Sunday of the Blind Man – the 5th week after Pascha

“Let us purify our senses and we shall behold Christ, radiant with the unapproachable light of the Resurrection, and we shall clearly hear Him say, Rejoice! As we sing the triumphal hymn” (Cannon of Pascha Sunday of Blind Man).”

“Since my souls’ noetic eyes are blind and sightless, I come unto You O Christ as did the man born blind. And in repentance I cry unto You, Of those in darkness are you the most radiant Light. (Kontakion Sunday of Blind Man)”

Fr. Behr:

- The theme of light continues in chapter 9, as light it is appropriate he gives sight to the man born blind. It takes place on the Sabbath (9:14) during the feast of Tabernacles.
- John 9 is a masterfully written narrative composed of seven scenes each obeying the rule that each scene should not have more than two characters. 1. 9:1-7 (the miracle); 2. The neighbors questioning the man (9:8-12); 3. The Pharisees interrogate the man (9:13-17); 4. The Pharisees interrogate the parents (9:18-23); 5. The Pharisees further interrogate the man (9:24-34); 6. Jesus leads the man to confession of faith (9:35-8); 7. Jesus and Pharisees (9:39-41)
- Through a gradual dialogue the man born blind is lead to a full confession of faith while at the same time the Pharisees grow increasingly blind.
- Jesus is named 7 times - The “Sabbath” (the 7 Day) on which this happens is the Sabbath of God Himself, whose work is fashioning the human being in the stature of Christ Himself.

The Blind Man

- Had no idea who healed him 9:6-7
- The man called Jesus healed me 9:11
- Describes Jesus as a Prophet 9:17
- Refers to Him as One from God 9:33
- Identifies Him as The Son of Man 9:35
- I believe and he worshipped Him 9:38

The Pharisees

- Jesus is not from God, he doesn’t keep Sabbath 9:16
- Threaten to expel His disciples from Synagogue 9:22
- Jesus is a sinner 9:24
- Don’t know where He came from 9:29
- By the end of the story their blindness is obvious

¹And as *Jesus* passed by, He saw a man *who was* blind from birth. ²And His disciples asked Him, saying, “Rabbi, who sinned, this one or his parents, that he should be born blind? (Chrys. They are perplexed by the situation)” ³Jesus answered, “Neither this one sinned nor his parents, but in order that the works of God should be made manifest in him.

Saint Chrysostom: “This He says not as indicating they did not sin,...for both this man has sinned and his parents, but his blindness is not from that cause;...but that the glory of God should be made manifest in him.

‘What,’ says one, ‘did he suffer wrong for the glory of God?’ What injustice, tell me? For what if God never willed to produce him at all? But I say he even received benefit from his blindness, since he recovered his interior sight. What were the Jews profited by their eyes? They have the greater judgment, being disabled even as they saw. What harm did this man receive from his disability? For by means of it he had his eyes opened. Then the evils of the present life are not evils, so neither are the good things good. Only sin is evil, but a disability is not evil.”

“...Jesus saw something else, something positive in pain. Sometimes evil exists and becomes an occasion to manifest the work of God. That is to say, with the healing that He will bring about, Christ will manifest the love of God toward suffering man (Bishop Gerasimos).”

4“It is needful for Me to be working the works of the *One* Who sent Me while it is day; night comes when no one is able to be working.

Saint Chrysostom: “What do these words mean? What are they consequent upon? Much. For what He says is of this kind: ‘While it is day, while the people may believe in Me, while this life lasts, it is needful for Me to be working.’ ‘The night comes,’ means, the future time ‘when no one is able to be working.’...that is, when there is no longer faith, nor labors, nor repentance.”

5“Whenever I may be in the world, I am *the* light of the world.”

Saint Ambrose: “He said this that we might believe Him to speak of the Incarnation; for, so far as He is Man, He is in this world for a season, but as God He exists at all times. In another place, too, He says: ‘Behold, I am with you all the days until the completion of the age [Mt. 28:20].’”

Saint Chrysostom: “Here He shows that even after the Cross He would bestow providential care for the ungodly, and bring many to Himself. For ‘it is yet day [Jn. 9:4].’ But after this, He completely cuts them off. And He declares this, saying, ‘Whenever I may be in the world, I am *the* light of the world [Jn. 9:5].’ As He also said to others, ‘While ye have the light, keep on believing in the light [Jn. 12:36].’” [Hom. 56, P.G. 59:330 (col. 309).]

Blessed Theophylact: “‘For through the teachings and the showing forth of the wonders I give light to souls....Since I am light, it is needful for Me also to give light to the senses and spiritually.’” [P.G. 124:634C (col. 45).]

6“Having said these things, He spat on the ground, and made clay out of the spittle, and anointed the eyes of the blind one with the clay,

Saint Chrysostom: “For since they heard that God made man, taking the dust of the earth, for this reason in like manner He also fashioned (clay). Indeed, for Him to have said, ‘I am the One Who took dust from the earth and fashioned the man,’ would have been arduous to bear and repugnant to His hearers. But when this was shown in actual deed, it no longer stood in their way. Wherefore by taking earth and mixing it with the spittle, thus His hidden glory was made manifest. For it was no small glory that He should be believed to be the Maker of creation...Note that “when He would heal him, He took away the blindness by a thing that increased it, that is, He put on clay.”

“Irenaeus notes that the action by which Jesus healed the man born blind (and therefore not the result of human causes) parallels the action by which God created human beings at the beginning, taking clay from

the earth and mixing his own powers with it, so that, as this is done ‘that the works of God might be manifest in him, Irenaeus can conclude ‘the work of God is fashioning the human being.’ (Fr. John Behr).”

Saint Paulinus writes: “He bestowed new eyes.”

Christ made eyeballs is the idea behind the Syriac verb according to St. Ephraim the Syrian, for “He fashioned the eyes with clay. The light sprang forth from the dust, just as in the beginning....He commanded the light, and it was born from the darkness. Likewise here too, He made clay from His spittle, and brought to fullness what was lacking in creation, which was from the beginning, to show that what was in His hand was bringing to completion what was lacking in nature....Because they were unwilling to believe that He was before Abraham, He proved to them by this deed that He was the Son of Him Whose hand had formed the first Adam from the earth.”

At the Vespers stichera for the Sunday of the Blind Man, the blind man describes himself as eyeless (ἀόμματος) [Mode Two]. The hymnographer, St. Joseph of Thessalonica, makes mention in the Orthros canon that Christ gave eyes (ὀμματώω) to the blind man. [Odes 4, 8, and 9, Mode Plagal One.]