

SOBORNOST

St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church

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American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese

*ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE
OF CONSTANTINOPLE*

SERVICES

Friday: Moleben to the Cross 6:00 AM

Saturday: Confession 5:00 PM

Great Vespers 5:30 PM

Sunday: Matins (Orthros) 8:45 AM

Children's Sunday School 9:30 AM

Divine Liturgy 10:00 AM.

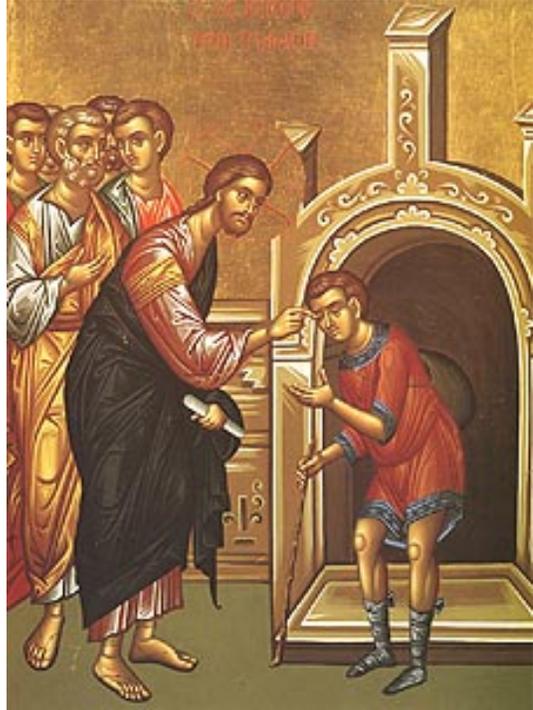
June 2, 2019 – Sunday of the Blind Man (6th Sunday of Pascha)

By Met. Anthony (Bloom) of Sourozh

At the end of today's reading, words stand that we pass by very often. The blind man says to Christ, "And who is the Son of God?" and Christ answers, "You have seen Him and He is speaking to you."

For us, the first words are so natural; the first event of our life, the first event of a meeting is that we see a person, but what was this wonder of this man who had never seen anything in the world and who, touched by the life-giving hand of Christ, of a sudden saw! And the first person he saw was his Lord and his God, Christ, the Son of Man.

I remember a Romanian writer telling us in his biography what definitive, what profound impression the face of the first man he remembers made. He remembers himself as a child, and over him - the inexpressibly beautiful face of his father who was a priest, looking at him, with all human love, with all the tenderness, and all the depth of a human gaze. And he says that this was a first vision for him in the icon which a human face can be when it is lit from inside by love and by understanding, by depth and by eternity, a vision of God. Here this man saw God in the features of Him who was God and who had become the Son of Man.



I would like to attract your attention also to something different. On another occasion we read the story of a paralytic healed by Christ; and the Church, singing the praises of God on that occasion says, "As this man found no one to show mercy on him, the Son of Mary, God Himself, stooped down and met his need". Because this man had not found another man to show mercy, to show compassion, to show concern, God has come down to him. Now we live in another time, we live in the time with God truly having become man in our midst, and more than this: He has made us to be living members of His body, an incarnate, concrete presence of His Incarnation, the temples of the Spirit, the place of the Presence. Now any man who is in need should at the same time find in each of us a man stirred to compassion, taught mercy and understanding by God become Man, and at the same time, simultaneously, meeting with us, he should be able to see the love of God in our eyes and to perceive the active, imaginative, creative action of divine charity in our words and in our deeds.

Since Christ has come into the world, the time of man has come; but not of man as severed from God, separated from Him, alien to Him, but a wonderful time when in man, in those who have discovered Christ, who have believed in Him, who have become one with Him - those men to whom God has entrusted the care of His world - people can both receive divine and human mercy and see human compassion, human love, human joy.

Is not this a great call, is not that something which should make us capable of great things? The time of God and the time of man is one, not only in the incarnate Son of God, but in this mysterious incarnate presence which each of us represents, the presence of God in the flesh, in human compassion, in human love, and this is an earnest claim and a challenge which the Gospel presents us with. Are we to one another and to those further afield that kind of humanity? New humanity, new creatures, new men with the newness of a renewed life, the life of God. This is what we are called to be.

Let us then reflect on it, make a decision, make a move and become an icon, a vision of God, not only in the shining of love in our eyes, not only in the words we speak, but also in every action and deed, so that the time of man should have become the day of the Son of Man, the day of the Lord. Amen.

CHRIST IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN INDEED!

Today's Epistle Lesson – The Acts of the Apostles 16:16-34

In those days, as we went to prayer, a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling. This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, "These men are the servants of the

Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation.” And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” And he came out that very hour. But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged *them* into the marketplace to the authorities. And they brought them to the magistrates, and said, “These men, being Jews, exceedingly trouble our city; and they teach customs which are not lawful for us, being Romans, to receive or observe.” Then the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates tore off their clothes and commanded *them* to be beaten with rods. And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw *them* into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely. Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone’s chains were loosed. And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself. But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, “Do yourself no harm, for we are all here.” Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. And he brought them out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” So they said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.” Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed *their* stripes. And immediately he and all his *family* were baptized. Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household.

Today’s Gospel Lesson – Saint John 9:1-38

At that time, as *Jesus* passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus answered, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him. I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; *the* night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” When He had said these things, He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva; and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. And He said to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which is translated, Sent). So he went and washed, and came back seeing. Therefore the neighbors and those who previously had seen that he was blind said, “Is not this he who sat and begged?” Some said, “This is he.” Others *said*, “He is

like him.” He said, “I am *he*.” Therefore they said to him, “How were your eyes opened?” He answered and said, “A Man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, ‘Go to the pool of Siloam and wash.’ So I went and washed, and I received sight.” Then they said to him, “Where is He?” He said, “I do not know.”

They brought him who formerly was blind to the Pharisees. Now it was a Sabbath when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. Then the Pharisees also asked him again how he had received his sight. He said to them, “He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see.” Therefore some of the Pharisees said, “This Man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath.” Others said, “How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?” And there was a division among them. They said to the blind man again, “What do you say about Him because He opened your eyes?” He said, “He is a prophet.” But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind and received his sight, until they called the parents of him who had received his sight. And they asked them, saying, “Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?” His parents answered them and said, “We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but by what means he now sees we do not know, or who opened his eyes we do not know. He is of age; ask him. He will speak for himself.” His parents said these *things* because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had agreed already that if anyone confessed *that He was Christ*, he would be put out of the synagogue. Therefore his parents said, “He is of age; ask him.” So they again called the man who was blind, and said to him, “Give God the glory! We know that this Man is a sinner.” He answered and said, “Whether He is a sinner *or not* I do not know. One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see.” Then they said to him again, “What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?” He answered them, “I told you already, and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear *it* again? Do you also want to become His disciples?” Then they reviled him and said, “You are His disciple, but we are Moses’ disciples. We know that God spoke to Moses; *as for this fellow*, we do not know where He is from.” The man answered and said to them, “Why, this is a marvelous thing, that you do not know where He is from; yet He has opened my eyes! Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him. Since the world began it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind. If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing.” They answered and said to him, “You were completely born in sins, and are you teaching us?” And they cast him out.

Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said to him, “Do you believe in the Son of God?” He answered and said, “Who is He,

Lord, that I may believe in Him?" And Jesus said to him, "You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you." Then he said, "Lord, I believe!" And he worshiped Him.

A Word From the Holy Fathers

Prooimion 1: When you had fulfilled your dispensation for us, and united things on earth with things in heaven, You were taken up in glory, Christ our God. In no way parted, but remaining inseparable, you cried to those who loved you, 'I am with you and there is no one against you.'

Prooimion 2: When you had sanctified the Disciples on the mount of Olives You were taken up into heaven, Lord, having promised them teaching and having cried to them: 'I am not parting from you. I am with you and there is no one against you.'

Abandoning on earth the things of earth, leaving to the dust the things of ash, come, let us come to our senses and raise on high our eyes and minds. Mortals, let us make our sight together with our senses fly to heaven's gates. Let us imagine we are standing on the Mount of Olives and that we bend our gaze on the Redeemer as he rides upon a cloud. For, from where the Lord has hastened back to heaven, there too the One who loves to give has distributed his gifts to his apostles, cherishing them as a father and crying out to them, "I am not parting from you. I am with you and there is no one against you."

The One who came down to earth, as he alone knows how, as he ascended from it, again as he knows how, took those he loved and led those he had gathered to a high mountain, so that, having mind and senses aimed on high, they might then abandon all that seeks the ground. And so, having climbed the Hill of Olives, they surrounded the Benefactor, as Luke, the initiate, recounts, while the Lord, raising his hands like wings, sheltered them, as an eagle the nest which it was warming, and says to the nestlings, "I have sheltered you from all evils. As I have cherished you, do you love me? I am not parting from you. I am with you and there is no one against you."

"High over you, my disciples, as God and maker of the whole world I stretch out my palms, which the lawless stretched out, bound and nailed. And so, as you bow your heads beneath my hands, understand, know, my friends, what I command. For, as though baptizing, I lay my hands upon you now, and, having blessed you, send you out enlightened, and made wise. Upon your heads, praise and majesty, upon your souls, illumination, as it is written, for I shall pour upon you of my Spirit, and you will be accepted by me, taught and chosen, faithful and my own. I am not parting from you. I am with you and there is no one against you."

In saying this, the Savior caused the apostles much great grief. At once they wept and, groaning deeply, said to the teacher, "Are you leaving us, O Compassionate One? Parting from those who love you? You spoke to us like someone going on a journey. These words indicate a departure, and this is why we are troubled, since we long to be with you; we seek your face, for it delights our souls. We have been wounded, bound by the most sweet sight of you. There is no God but you. Do not take yourself far away from those who love you. Stay with us and say to us, 'I am not parting from you. I am with you and there is no one against you.'"

"We have abandoned our whole way of life and fled it like violence. To gain you, we have become strangers and aliens on earth. The first of us, Peter, when he became your friend, disposed of everything that he had before. Andrew, his own brother, when he found you, immediately left the things of the world and took your cross on his shoulders. Do you wish to abandon, Master, such a renunciation? And are you hurrying to leave us as though you had forgotten us? Let it not be, O King. Let us not become a laughing-stock for those who hate us. Let them not cry out to us, 'Where then is he who said, "I am not parting from you. I am with you and there is no one against you.'"

"Do you despise, Redeemer, and do you reckon nothing to the friendship of the sons of Zebedee? Remember, Lover of mankind, how they heard and did not disobey your divine word. They did not say in their hearts, 'Who is this who calls us?' But they chose you even over their own father. Matthew again considered the profit of the customs house as a total loss, since he longed for your wealth. Thomas the Twin also hated life itself. And in a word we have all said, 'We love you more than all.' Then do not leave us. Take us in your arms, the One who fills all things. Enfold us and say to us, 'I am not parting from you. I am with you and there is no one against you.'"

When the Savior had listened to the Apostles and seen the sorrow of those who loved him, then he supported them as a father his sons. He took pity and cried out, "Do not weep, my friends, for this is not a moment for tears, nor is it a day of sorrow; it is an hour of joy. For I am taking wings to go towards my Father and I am coming to rest in my tent. For I made the firmament of heaven a tent, not a tent which circumscribes, but which surrounds me, as Isaiah cried, 'God has established heaven as a vault, and dwells there as in a tent', he who says to his own, 'I am not parting from you. I am with you and there is no one against you.'"

"So now, be joyful and radiant, and adopting an air of gladness, sing a new song. For everything that may happen, happens for your sake. It was for you I came down and went through all, that I might please you, and you might receive me. It is for you again that I ascend to heaven, to prepare the place where I must be with

you. For there are many dwelling places on high with my Father, some contain the fathers, others are filled with the just and others with the Prophets. But your dwelling no one yet knows. I shall prepare it and take you. I am not parting from you. I am with you and there is no one against you."

"Now rise upright, stand firm and contemplate with blameless eye this taking up. As you see it, understand it as of the body, not the Godhead. For the flesh that you see is reaching the things on high. For every place is full of my Godhead. But nevertheless this visible body, which is being lifted up, is conjoined to that of me which is not apparent. For I was united to that which is apparent. I am one, unseen yet at the same time seen, I am really the one you look on, and I have not been changed, as the Scripture said. I am both immortal and like you, over above you and in your midst. I am not parting from you. I am with you and there is no one against you."

When Christ had said these things to his friends, he then made a sign to the archangels, to prepare for his pure steps an impassable ascent. And no sooner had they been ordered, than the first of the angels cried to all the principalities on high, "Lift up the gates and fling wide the heavenly and glorious doors, for the Master of glory comes. Clouds, spread out your backs beneath the One who mounts. Bright air, prepare yourself for the One who journeys through you. Stand open, heavens. Heaven of heavens, receive him, because he is coming to you, he who says to his own, 'I am not parting from you. I am with you and there is no one against you.'"

Those in the height immediately obeyed, and opening at once all the heights, thrones, dominions with principalities and powers ran to meet him, and, swiftly spreading the cloud as a chariot, sent it to the Mount of Olives. It came down and took into its bosom the One who drives the clouds and makes them give birth to showers. Taking him then, it carried him, or rather it was carried - for he who was borne bore the cloud which carried him, as Mary once did. For Scripture prophetically calls her cloud, she who is guarded by him who dwelt in her, who said to his friends, "I am not parting from you. I am with you and there is no one against you."

Not one of the apostles was slothful, but together they were attentive to what was being accomplished, and all raised their faces to the heights as they watched his taking up. Immediately the cloud, lowering its back, became a chariot for his unblemished foot. The heaven was rent apart like a tunic, and the One born from Mary ascended on high, as fiery choirs preceded him, crying out, "Come, Master, for your throne is ready; mount, be lifted up on the wings of the winds, and come to the Father's bosom. For he is clearly your throne for ever, where you dwell and

which you do not leave, even as you cry out to those below, 'I am not parting from you. I am with you and there is no one against you.'

So when the faithful saw what had taken place, at once, like David, they chanted and said, "Truly God has gone up with a shout, the Lord to the sound of the trumpet." As they chanted together and looked on high, a pair of Angels came towards them, in the way that the book of Acts teaches: When the Creator had been taken up and the saints were gazing intently, there came upon them two beings, like men, resplendent by their raiment, who cried out, "Why are you standing here? On what are you gazing? What do you wish to look on? See, God is seated on his throne. He was our King, the One who cried out to you, 'I am not parting from you. I am with you and there is no one against you.'"

Be amazed no longer, Galileans, for Jesus Christ, as he has been taken up, so too he will come, as you have seen him arriving on high. For he has been clearly taken up and has not been translated. It is not the same for Christ as it was for Enoch of old. For the well-known Enoch passed over from things of earth; he was not found worthy of those of heaven, but was placed in the tents of the just, while Elijah, seated on the fiery chariot, ascended, yet did not reach heaven, as it is written, but 'as towards heaven'. But the God of Enoch and the God of Elijah, on ascending to heaven, declared to you, 'I am not parting from you. I am with you and there is no one against you.'"

But immediately after they heard these words the disciples said to one another, "These are surely faithful witnesses of Christ's assumption, for they are heavenly beings, for had they not seen him on high in heaven, they would not have come down to proclaim it to us. He is Master of angels and through angels makes known his loving dispensations for mankind, he who dawned from the Virgin. He was born, and angels revealed his nativity. He was raised, and again angels revealed his rising. He has ascended into heaven, and has revealed to us his divine and radiant assumption through good angels, 'I am not parting from you. I am with you and there is no one against you.'"

Let us nerve ourselves then against the deceivers. Let us be armed as a company against the calumniators. Let us all toil, let us wrestle steadfastly, until we have thrown them. Let us say with boldness to the sons of perdition, "Where is he, whom you held as a corpse in a tomb? Where is the one whom the soldiers were guarding, and your seals protecting? How was he stolen? How was he taken up? Who spirited him away? Who carried him off? He was stolen, was he, from the grave? How then from the firmament has he sent now to us and declared to us, 'Do not be afraid of them. They will not overcome you, for I said to you, "I am not parting from you. I am with you and there is no one against you."?'"

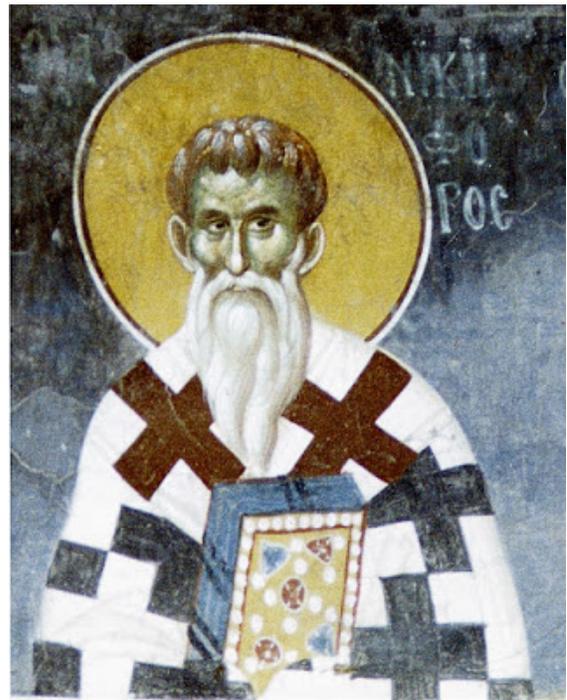
With thoughts such as these the Disciples of the Deliverer, Christ and God who had been taken up, then came down from the mount with gladness and rejoicing. And arriving below, as the Scripture teaches, bowing down they worshiped the God on high, and addressed words full of praise to the mountain as they extolled the Mount of Olives, because it had been found worthy of such honor. "Mount Sinai", they said, "you have surpassed. For it received the steps of Moses, but you, those of God himself. On the former was the law, but on you the grace which both fashioned Moses and said to us, 'I am not parting from you. I am with you and there is no one against you.'"

"Now you too are far above Lebanon; Tabor and Hermon are less than you, because on them the Lover of mankind did not do what he has done on you." When they had spoken thus, the Creator's Disciples limited their words to these, and raising their eyes and hands on high, they besought the King of things in heaven and on earth, crying out, "Sinless One, give us your peace and through us to your world at the prayers of her who gave you birth. For the foe cannot bear to look on the fair deeds done by us. But drive him from us, for you said, 'I am not parting from you. I am with you and there is no one against you.'"

– St. Romanos the Melodist, *Kontakion 32 - On the Ascension*

Also Commemorated Today: St. Nicephorus the Confessor, Patriarch of Constantinople

Saint Nicephorus was a dignitary at the court of the Empress Irene (797-802). After embracing monasticism, he became widely known for his piety. He assumed the Patriarchal Throne of Constantinople in 806 and became a zealous defender of the holy Icons. In 815, the Iconoclast Emperor Leo the Armenian (813-820) exiled him to Prokonnis, where he fell asleep in the Lord in 828. Saint Nicephorus left behind three writings against Iconoclasm. In 846, the relics of Patriarch Nicephorus were returned to Constantinople and placed in the Great Church of Hagia Sophia for one day before being transferred to and enshrined in the Church of the Holy Apostles. (*from oca.org*)



Celebration of the Feast of the Ascension of Our Lord

We will celebrate the Ascension with a Vesperal Liturgy Wednesday at 7:00 PM. Please observe at least a 3 hour fast if you plan to receive the Eucharist.

May Treasurer's Report

Christ is Risen! For the month of May we had an operating income of \$9,000 and expenses of \$10,065. We were still able to meet all our obligations, add \$680 to our mortgage, and provide over \$500 for charitable works. Please continue to give generously to support our Parish! In Christ, Josh Moore, Treasurer.

Social Team for June 9

Team 6 is up next week – Tucker, Blaydoe M., Woods, Wright RC. Thank you!

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In Your Prayers – Please Remember... His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW, His Eminence Metropolitan GREGORY, Fr. Joseph & Family, Greek Orthodox Archbishop Paul Yazigi of Aleppo, Syriac Orthodox Archbishop Yohanna Ibrahim of Aleppo, His Grace Bishop Neofitos of Nyeri and Mt. Kenya, Fr. John & Pani Betty Jean Baranik, Presbyteria Katie Baker and family, Santiago Alzugaray, Jeffrey Carey, Tatyana and Slava Chumak & family, Xenia Chilkowich, Jon Church, Ramius Connour, Curtis Cooper, Luke Cooper, Tina Crull, Mary Diane David, Ron Dominiacki, Linda A. Georgiev, Heather Himler, John Homick, Cameron Houk, Helen Janowiak, John M. Janowiak, Tucker Karl and family, Robert & Pam Karpin, Andrew Kinn, Kopan family, Brian, Helen, and Luke Mahony, Valentina Makowelski, Susan Matula, Anna Meinhold, Dn. Henry Middleton, David & Kathryn Newman, Bobby Nutter & Family, Henry & Lisa Osborne, Westin Perry & Parents, John Reece, Mary Reed, Chris & Kaitlin Rixey, Jerry Von Ronne, Anne Rosario, James, Theodore and Christina Ristas, Samson Family, Sharon Sheptak, Alexander Shostko, Bernie Takabayashi & family, Dawn & Faith Ulmschneider, Lydia Vita, Christine, Marshall, Nathaniel, Subdcn. Nectarios and Ia, the Syrian Christians displaced by war, Mother Virginia Marie and the Carmelite Nuns of Port Tobacco, and all those in need of our prayers. (Please advise Fr. Joseph of changes.)