

# SUNDAY OF THE BLIND MAN

May 24, 2020 • *Thirty-sixth day of Paschaltide*



## CHRIST IS RISEN!

*Canticle*

**T**his is the chosen and holy day, the first of Sabbaths, the King and Lord. It is the feast of all feasts, and festival of festivals, in which we bless Christ unto all the ages.

*Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down Death by death,  
and upon those in the tombs bestowing life.*



## AT EVENING PRAYER

*from the Pentecostarion, at Orthros*

**B**y Thy precious Cross, O Christ, Thou hast put the devil to shame; and by Thy Resurrection, Thou hast blunted the sting of sin; and Thou hast saved us from the gates of Death. We glorify Thee, O only-begotten Son.

*Glory to Thy holy Resurrection, O Lord.*

**H**e that granted resurrection unto the race of man was led as a sheep to slaughter; the princes of hades were terrified of Him, and the grievous gates were lifted up; for Christ, the King of Glory, hath entered, saying to those in bonds: Go forth; and to those in darkness: Reveal yourselves.

*Glory to Thy holy Resurrection, O Lord.*

**H**e that was born blind thought to himself and said: Was I born without eyes perchance for the sins of my parents? Was I perchance born to be an example, because of the unbelief of the nations? I cease not from asking: When is it night, when is it day? My feet cannot endure striking against the stones. For I have neither seen the sun shining, nor beheld in image Him Who fashioned me. But I beseech Thee, O Christ God, look upon me and have mercy on me.



JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

*Archbishop of Constantinople*

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*~ from a homily on the Gospel of John ~*

*As Jesus passed by, He saw a man blind from his birth.*

*And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"*

**A**S JESUS PASSED BY, He saw a man who was blind from birth. Being full of love for mankind and caring for our salvation, and desiring to stop the mouths of the foolish, He omits nothing that is His to do, even though there is no one present to take heed of His works. The Prophet knew this when he said: *That Thou mightest be justified in Thy words, and prevail when Thou art judged. (Psalm 50:4)* Therefore, here also, when they would not receive His sublime words but said that He had a devil and attempted to kill Him, He went forth from the Temple and healed a blind man, mitigating their anger by His absence, and, by working the miracle, softening their hardness and cruelty, causing them

to believe in His words. And He performed a miracle which was not common, but one which took place then for the first time: *Never since the world began*, said the man who had been healed, *has it been heard that someone opened the eyes of a man born blind.* (John 9:32) Someone may, perhaps, have opened the eyes of a blind person, but never of one blind from birth. That He fully intended to do this work when He left the Temple is clear from the following: it was He Who saw the blind man, not the blind man who came to Him. And He looked upon him so earnestly that even His disciples perceived it. They came to question Him, because when they saw Him regarding the man so earnestly, they asked Him, *Who sinned, this man, or his parents?* This question was a mistake, for how could he have sinned before he was born? And why, if his parents had sinned, would he have been punished? Why, then, did they come to put forth this question? Previously, when He had healed the paralytic, Jesus said, *See, you have been made well, sin no more.* (John 5:14) They, therefore, understanding this to mean that he was paralyzed on account of his sin, said, 'Well, that man was paralyzed because of his sins.' But what would you say concerning this man? Has he sinned? It is not possible to say so, since he has been blind from birth. Did his parents sin? Neither can one say this, because a child does not suffer punishment for its father. If we saw a child being badly treated, we would exclaim, "What can one say of this? What has the child done?" It is not a question we are asking, but rather that we are perplexed. In the same way, the disciples spoke in this case, not so much as to ask for information, but out of perplexity. What, then, did Christ say?

*Neither this man nor his parents sinned.*

He did not say this as if He was acquitting them of sins, for He did not say only, *Neither this man nor his parents sinned*, but He also added that for him to have been born blind was so that the Son of God should be glorified in him. Both this man and his parents had sinned, but his blindness did not derive from that. And He said this not merely to signify that this man was not such a case nor that others had been made blind for the same reason (*i.e.* the sins of their parents), since it cannot be that when one person sins another should be punished. If we allow this, we must concede that he sinned before he was born. So, when He said, *neither has this man sinned*, He was stating that it is not possible to sin from birth and be punished for it; likewise, when He said, *nor his parents*, He meant that a person cannot be punished because of their parents. He removed any suspicion of this when He spoke through the words of Ezekiel: *As I live, says the Lord, you shall no longer use this parable in Israel: 'The fathers eat sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.'* (Ezekiel 18:3,2) And Moses says: *Fathers shall not be put to death for their sons, nor shall sons be put to death for their fathers.* (Deuteronomy 24:16) And regarding a certain king, (*Amaziah, in 4 Kings 14:5-6*) Scripture says that, for this very reason, he did not do this thing, but observed the law of Moses. But if anyone says, 'Why is it said, then, that God *repays the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation?*' (Deuteronomy 5:9) we would answer that the assertion is not universal, but that it was spoken with reference to some of those who came out of Egypt. And its meaning is this: since those who came out of Egypt, after signs and wonders had been given, were actually worse than their forefathers who had not seen any of these things, they would also suffer what their forebears suffered, because they dared to commit the same crimes. And if you give attention to that passage, you will certainly know that this is the case.

Why then was he born blind? The answer is: That the glory of God should be made manifest.

Here we have another difficulty if we are saying that it was not possible for the glory of God to be manifested except through this man's punishment. Certainly, it was not said that this manifestation was impossible, because it was possible; rather, He said that it might be manifested *in this man*. Someone might say, 'What? Did he suffer wrong for the glory of God?' What wrong, tell me? What if God had never willed him into existence at all? But I would assert that he even received benefit from his blindness, since he recovered the sight of his inner eyes. How did the Jews profit from their eyes? They incurred the heavier punishment, since they were blind even while they saw. How did this man suffer from his blindness? For, by means of it he recovered his sight. The evils of the present life are not evils, and neither are the good things good; sin alone is evil, but blindness is not an evil. And He Who had brought this man from not being into being, also had the power to leave him as he was.

But there are those who say that this phrase—*That the glory of God should be made manifest*—is not at all expressive of the cause, but expresses the consequence of the miracle; as when He says, *For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind.* (John 9:39) Yet, He did not come simply that those who saw might be made blind. Again, the Apostle Paul says, *Because what may be known of God is manifest in them, so that they are without excuse.* (Romans 1:19-20) Yet, He did not show them this so that they might be deprived of an excuse, but that they might obtain an excuse. In another place, the Apostle says, *The Law entered that the offense might abound;* (Romans 5:20) yet, it was not for this that it entered, but that sin might be checked. Do you see that in all these cases the

proposition defines the consequence? Just as an excellent architect might construct part of a house and leave the rest unfinished, so that he can prove to unbelievers that he really was creator of the whole, so God also joins together and completes our body, as if it were a decaying house: healing the withered hand, bracing paralyzed limbs, straightening the lame, cleansing the lepers, raising up the sick, making cripples well, recalling the dead from death, opening eyes that were closed, or adding them for those who had none. By correcting all of these things, which are blemishes arising from the infirmity of our nature, He showed His power.

When He said, *That the glory of God might be made manifest*, He was speaking of Himself, not of the Father; the Father's glory was already manifest. For since they had heard that God made man, taking the dust of the earth, so also Christ made clay. To have said, 'I am He Who took the dust of the earth and made man, would have seemed a hard thing to His hearers; but this, when shown by actual working, no longer stood in their way. So that, by taking earth and mixing it with spittle, He manifested His hidden glory; for it was no small glory that He should be deemed the Architect of the creation. *Amen.*

