

HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS CELEBRATES THE DIVINE LITURGY AT THE HOLY MONASTERY OF SAINT GERASIMOS

On Sunday, May 11/24, 2020, His Beatitude our Father and Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Monastery of St. Gerasimos of the Jordan, which is located at the West Bank of the river Jordan before its estuary to the Dead Sea.

The Divine Liturgy was celebrated in completion of the celebration of the commemoration of St. Gerasimos, which is on 4th/17th May, but at that time the feast was held without the participation of any external congregation due to the COVID-19.

On this occasion, His Beatitude read the following sermon:

“And as Jesus passed by, He saw a man which was blind from his birth. And His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him” (John 9:1-3).

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Noble Christians

Today, the sixth Sunday since Easter, we celebrate the miracle of our Lord Jesus Christ to the blind man from birth, through which miracle, Christ revealed the works of His God and Father.

To the disciples' question, "who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" (John 9:2) Christ replied, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him" (John 9:3). Interpreting these words of the Lord, St. Cyril of Alexandria says that Jesus does not clarify His disciples' question, because this is a work of the Holy Spirit. "And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:7-8).

The miracle of giving sight to the man who was born blind is an irrefutable witness, that Christ, being the Son of God the Father, a perfect God and a perfect man, came to the world in order to enlighten and sanctify the world, as much through His teaching as also through His miracles. "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (John 9:8) the Lord says.

In other words, Christ is the spiritual and irreproachable light, "through which the enlightened ones should be illumined through faith", St. Ziganinos says. And according to St. Theophylactos, "I am the light of the world", meaning that through the teaching and the working of the miracles Christ illumines the souls.

Worth of our attention in the miracle of the man who was born blind is the fact, as St. Cyril of Alexandria says, "that by His own Will and command, the Saviour wanted to heal the man". And according to St. Chrysostom, "Christ Himself saw the blind man, it was not the blind man that came to Him. This means that Jesus was not invited by the blind man to heal his eyes". It was not possible for this blind man to see Christ, but Christ saw him and restored his eyesight with the miraculous healing.

In other words my dear brethren, Christ is found and recognized by those who neither seek, nor see Him, as the prophet Isaiah says; "I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not"(Isaiah 65:1). And if we know or become aware of anything regarding Christ, this is owed to the fact that we have been known by Him as St. Paul says. "But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God"(Galatians 4:9) and "I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus"(Phil. 3:12).

This teaching of St. Paul is confirmed by the preaching of repentance of St. John the Baptist, who in this context refers to prophet Isaiah by saying; "and every flesh shall see the salvation of God". Interpreting this verse, St. Cyril of Alexandria says: "flesh here refers to man as a whole and every human flesh. In this manner every flesh shall see the salvation of God, namely of the Father, for He has sent our Saviour His Son."

Behold therefore why the hymn writer of the Church says "who can tell of Thy mighty works, O Christ, or who can number the multitudes of Thy wonders? For even as Thou, in Thy goodness, didst appear on earth twofold, of nature, so didst Thou grant twofold healings to the sick; for Thou didst open not only the bodily eyes of the man who was blind from the womb, but those of his soul also. Wherefore, he confessed to Thee, the hidden God, Who grantest great mercy unto all" (Pentecostarion, Sunday of the Blind man Matins, praises, Glory).

Indeed, not only the eyes of the body, but also those of the soul, did Christ open of the man who was born blind, as He "wants all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:4) according to St. Paul. This truth, namely the light of the truth, the God-man our Lord Jesus Christ, did the recovered eyes of the blind man see, and that is why at Jesus' question; "believest thou in the Son of God" (John 9:35) the blind man said "Lord I believe" and worshiped Him"

(John 9:38).

The spiritual worship He asks on our part, St. Cyril of Alexandria says, hearkening to Christ's words to the Samaritan woman: "a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth...God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth" (John 4:23-24).

Amen. Christ is risen!"

And the hardworking and hospitable Hegoumen Archimandrite Chrysostom hosted them for a meal.

From Secretariat-General