

Homily for the 7th Sunday after Pentecost

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Sunday, 4th of August 2019

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, One God. Amen.

Today's Gospel reading tells us the parable of Jesus Christ our Lord healing two blind men.

Every Gospel reading is full of immeasurable meaning, because the Gospel speaks of eternal timeless truths, it speaks of the eternal truth of God.

Today's Gospel is no different as it speaks of eternal truths that are of great importance to the everyday lives of each one of us. It speaks of the love of God for man and of the love of man for God. It speaks of the fact that God always provides us with His merciful assistance and never leaves us.

We should all know and remember that whatever may happen to us, God will never abandon us when we are in trouble or in need. He only wants us to do one thing. He wants us to remain with Him through our faith in Him, our love for Him and our trust in Him.

But let us turn our attention to the two blind men. When they ask for healing, Jesus Christ our God asks them, 'Do you believe that I am able to do this?' They immediately answered 'Yes. Lord', and Christ heals them and proclaims, "According to your faith let it be to you".

This is a constant and recurring theme in the Gospels. When Christ heals an infirmity, He states, time and time again, "Your faith has made you well!"

When he heals the servant of the centurion, Christ attributes the healing to the faith of the centurion. When he heals the woman with the issue of blood, He attributes the healing to her faith.

Again, and again, Jesus says, "your faith has made you well". There is an extremely important message here: if we want to benefit from our relationship with God, we must be faithful, we must believe.

God's presence is not the variable. God's love is not the variable. God's willingness is not the variable. In fact, He is the one and only invariable factor that we can ever experience in our lives.

God is truly omnipresent. He is truly all merciful. When we come to church, He is there. When we get in our car, he is there. When we are at work or at home, he is there. Wherever we are, he is there.

When we sin, and when we do good things, He is there! When we go to sleep, and when we wake up, He is there! He loves us unconditionally and He loves the whole world, and this regardless whether we know Him or not.

As with the two blind men, the Lord has given us the opportunity to heal the blindness of the eye of our soul.

God has given us a sure and prescribed path toward our healing, our growth, and salvation through His Church. He teaches us how to pray through the Church.

He feeds us with the Sacrament through the Church, He teaches us the disciplines of the ascetic life: fasting and prayer through the Church, and He gives us Confession through the Church as a means to be purified, so that we may continue to learn and entrust more of ourselves to Him who is the Great Physician. And through these means we progress in the knowledge and love of God.

This progress in the knowledge and love of God is always meant to be active, never inactive. To be deified, we must be active Christians.

It is quite easy for all of us to get sidetracked, to have our own opinions and our own ways which are not those of the Church.

Living a secular life when it suits us, because it is much easier; easier than living in the footsteps of Christ, taking Orthodoxy on our terms, picking and choosing what we like and leaving out what we do not like. That is not Christianity, and it surely will not bring us the healing we need.

One of the most important means to find healing from our spiritual sickness which Christ gives us, through His Church, is the Sacrament of Repentance: Confession, and the subsequent reception of the Eucharist; Communion.

For this reason, the Church encourages us to take regular confession so that we can enjoy the benefits of regular reception of the Eucharist, which is also called the "Medicine of Immortality", because it unites us with Christ Himself and heals our souls.

But this can only happen if we receive in faith, when we have properly prepared and purified ourselves. This is itself a part of that Medicine. Confession and Reception, the Church teaches us, go hand in hand.

The prayers for reception of the Eucharist ask for confession and its purification as a preparation for worthily receiving Christ's precious and all-holy Body and Blood.

And through all of this, we can see that our healing of the soul demands something of our material bodies, of our time, of our energy, of our worship, of our prayers, of our heartfelt repentance and requires us to turn to Christ our God, just like the blind men did when they cried out, "Lord, have mercy on us."

By the power of the Holy Spirit working through the Sacrament of Confession, we learn the root causes of the sins that cause us to stumble, that cause us and others sadness and pain, that cause our pride and false dependence on ourselves.

We can only grow in confidence in our identity and self-worth in Christ, if we begin to peel away the layers of our souls to reveal the core of our struggles, the passions and self-will that holds us back.

Confession is truly a gift from God. But this type of soul searching, demands a necessary humility and willingness on our part to accept healing from God.

We must spend time in prayer, self-examination, and worship, in order to make the most of the Sacrament and the healing and growth that God would offer us through it.

Our ongoing willingness to be healed, to progress in our healing, is an integral part of our salvation. Saint James teaches us that we are saved through our belief, our faith, that manifests itself through our actions and deeds, the living out of that faith. Faith and works go hand in hand. These are not just empty words.

We cannot afford to lay aside our struggle with sin and lay aside our obedience to what Christ teaches us through His Church. Christ asked the blind men, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" We have been shown the way if we want to make use of it.

My prayer for each one here is that we would all continue to make use of the means for our salvation, which Christ offers us through His Church for our growth, our healing, and our salvation. And to never doubt those means.

As we grow, individually and as a community in our reflection of Christ and the Kingdom, we must also help others find their healing and salvation in Christ through our example.

Hopefully each one of us will be able to cultivate the attitude of soul and the cooperation of body to follow Christ with all that we have, all that we are, crying out to Him as did the blind men, "Lord, have mercy on us," knowing that He is the Lord who loves us and indeed has mercy on our souls.

Our Lord Jesus Christ walked the earth nearly 2000 years ago, healing every infirmity and disease in people, just like He healed these two blind men of the Gospel who had unwavering faith in Him.

Now, too, the Lord Jesus Christ heals all who have faith in Him throughout the entire world with that same Divine power, granting them peace, true joy, and salvation.

Let us believe Him, just as the two blind men believed Him. Let us be faithful like them in our faith and love for Him. And let us glorify throughout all the earth His most wondrous and majestic Divine Name.

Amen.