



Sunday of the blind man

John 9:1-38

"It is not for a good work that we stone you but for blasphemy; because you, being a man, make yourself God." (Friday gospel John 10:17-28)

One may wonder what the religious authority at that time would have seen in Jesus. This was one of the questions asked on Thursday when we read the gospel in the chapel. The gospel of the week from John reflects all this dialogue between the authorities and Jesus. Do they want to stone Him because He made Himself the Son of God or because He was the Son of God? Was it on account of blasphemy because of what He said or jealousy because of Who He was? On the cross Jesus prays: *"Forgive them Father because they do not know what they are doing."* (Lk23:34). On the other hand, in the parable of the vineyard, the ungrateful stewards say: *"This is the heir; come let us kill him; and the inheritance shall be ours."* (Mk 12:7).

Whether they knew the truth or not, the result would have been the same. This reflects a reality of the human condition: to render to evil the goodness of our life; to destroy what is of God and to bring death into the world. (Father will speak this coming Tuesday on Psalm 11 about the freedom that the righteous has when the foundations of the world are destroyed.)

How could anyone have such a violent reaction in the presence of Christ, in the presence of the Prince of peace? On Friday, when we reflected on today's gospel, Henry said something similar. He said he wrote a poem about a man who contemplated suicide while being in paradise. "It was because he could not see the paradise, Henry said." How can we see and fall in love with the Beloved?

"Do you believe in the Son of man?" ... " He said, "Lord, I believe"; and he worshiped him.

Today's gospel tells us that it is Christ who heals our eyes. We also hear this in the voice of the prophets: the blind, the lame, and the poor (see Isaiah). We have to become poor in order to be healed, in order to see Christ and learn to love Him. We have to accept our blindness and our vulnerability, to desire and to receive, as Elisha said on Friday, the gift of healing. The religious authority thought they were fully healthy and could see perfectly: *"Are we also blind?" (Thursday gospel)*. But the reality was that they did not want to see, not Christ but the hell in which they were living, the darkness that had taken over their souls. At first, when we receive the light of the resurrection, we see the darkness in which we live. The realization of our hell has to be real. Because darkness gives you the illusion of light. The realization comes with dynamis and it requires a complete change of heart. Br Luke talked on Thursday about the Apostle Paul, about how he became blind after seeing the light, about how he had to accept his darkness and his vulnerability by trusting the voice of Ananias who called him brother. He had to trust the one he had wanted to deliver unto death.

To accept the light means first to come to the realization of our own hell, to trust and to desire to be made well.

The religious authority was not troubled by a theological problem but rather by a lack of compassionate understanding of the heart. They could not see or accept who Jesus is because they had not been doing the will of the Father. They had been silencing within their heart the voice that is leading us through our darkness to light and healing, to the Son of Man whom we love with all our heart.

On Friday, Henry told us a story of when he was working at the mission about how he used to hear regularly racial insults addressed to him. He said he continued to cook food for the person and to serve him. At one point, the person gave up and changed his behaviour. "Then I realized, Henry said, the real power of forgiveness. It changes the heart of the man we forgive." That's why, the reward for the sinner who wants to stone Christ is forgiveness. Until the sinner, as Elisha said, would eventually receive the gift with gratitude.

"It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him.

As there is a human heart who, in silence, hates its own soul, there is also the human heart who suffers for the sake of God. Both come to this reality as to a process. At the mission, so many times we come across the innocence of the human heart who suffers in silence without bringing attention to itself. Many times, we wonder why, and we cannot be satisfied with whatever answer we come up with. If the reward of the sinner is his own forgiveness, we see today that the reward of the human innocence who suffers is to behold the face of Christ. That's why the faith of the poor is so genuine. Because within poverty they really see and fall in love with the One they know. More striking today than the hate of the religious authority who wants Jesus dead is the faith of the blind man who worships Jesus. How can that be? How could he just trust the Son man who healed him and worship Him in that very moment. It was so because of all the silent suffering that he had lived for the sake of Christ. Now he saw the face of the One who took his hand and guided him in darkness. He recognized His voice when he saw His face. Like Mary Magdalene at the tomb. This is the reward of the innocent soul who undertook suffering for the sake of glorifying God.

Br Luke said on Friday that the blind man washed himself into the pool that was named Siloam (which means "sent"). He said this made him think of when Jesus sends his apostles to do missionary work. The mission in itself is the place where we have our eyes washed. It is the place where we are taken out from our own hell because we see the face of Christ in the innocence of the poor, the sick, the addicted, the homeless and those with physical and mental disabilities. If it was not for them, the light we see within our heart would be darkened. The book of Tobit says that the evil king Manasseh repented because he saw the face of God as the poor were passing by. He did not see His face within himself, nor did he repent intentionally, but rather because he saw the suffering of those he had afflicted through his sins.

"My Father loves me" (gospel on Friday). This is the voice of the prayer that Jesus prays in every soul who experiences human rejection.

Mission church collections of 1 Sunday : May 14, 2023, Donations \$100, Candle collections \$58.25, wine/candles \$20

May 22 - 28

Tuesday	8:30 am 7:30 pm	Morning Prayer Psalms Study – via zoom	Wednesday	4:00 pm 6:30 pm	Vespers Paschal Matins, procession followed by Vespers Liturgy for the Ascension
Thursday	8:30 am 12:30 pm 2:00 pm	Morning Prayer Noon Hours Jesus Prayer	Friday	7:00 am 12:30pm 2:00pm	Orthros Noon Hours Jesus Prayer
Saturday	9:00am	Morning Prayer	Sunday	7:00 am 8:30 am	Orthros Divine Liturgy



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We are an apostolate of the ecumenical patriarchate "Mother Church of Christ's poor" under
the Omophorion of Metropolitan Gregory of Nyssa

St. Silouan Chapel, May 21, 2023

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