

ON SPIRITUAL SIGHT
36th Sunday After Pentecost
January 30, 2011
Moscow, Church of the Mother of God "Joy of All Who Sorrow"

by Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev

Our Lord Jesus Christ heals a blind man who was sitting by the roadside and asking for salvation and healing. The Lord said to him, "Your faith has saved you" (Lk. 18:35-42).

These words which were spoken by our Savior bear witness to the fact that there is a direct correlation between spiritual sight and faith, and between spiritual blindness and unbelief. Unbelief is spiritual blindness, which prevents one from seeing God and the reality of the spiritual world. The faithless person is incapable of seeing the spiritual reality which exists beyond the visible world. Spiritual blindness is the inability of a man to see the hand of God in his destiny. The man who is spiritually blind attributes all that is good in his life to himself alone. If he achieves success, it is the result of his talents, abilities, and potentiality alone, or his success could merely be the result of an accidental chain of events. However, when he experiences temptation, trials, grief or suffering, such a person becomes fainthearted and depressed, because what he is enduring doesn't fit into the scheme of his understanding of happiness, success, and good fortune. Such a man does not see the reason for either good or bad events which occur in his life. He believes that luck or misfortune is purely accidental.

Furthermore, as a rule, the man who is spiritually blind does not see his own shortcomings. He thinks that everything he does is as it should be, but if problems should arise in interpersonal relationships, then he blames others. He feels that he is underestimated, misunderstood, or that others have accepted or done something wrong. He is certain: "I do everything correctly, and everyone else around me behaves badly."

The man whose eyes have been opened, and to whom the Lord has given spiritual sight, sees the hand of God in everything. He understands that life is not merely an accidental chain of events, but that the Lord leads and guides him, like a mother who loves her children, on the path to the Kingdom of Heaven. Such a man understands that if difficulties occur in his interpersonal relationships, then before anything else, he must first ask himself, "Have I behaved and acted correctly? Did I not fully see or understand something correctly, did I behave or speak as I should have?" The man with spiritual sight understands that the many reasons for his misfortune and suffering lie within himself.

If he achieves success, then he thanks God, because he understands that all good comes from God. And even if a man achieves much by his own labors, the fact is, isn't it the Lord who gave him the talents, health and strength, so that he might be able to accomplish all of these things?

These are the differences between those who are spiritually blind and those who have spiritual sight. Both types of people live together in one and the same world and intermingle in one society. They may work in the same office, they may live in the same house, but, nonetheless, they accept and understand things in absolutely different ways. One has sight, and the other is blind, one has faith, and the other is faithless. When a miracle occurs, one says, "This is a miracle from God, which occurred in order to strengthen my faith." The other, having witnessed the same miracle, says, "This is merely a series of accidental events which just happened to have fallen together into just the right place; there is no miracle here at all."

The Lord opened for us, people who have faith, spiritual eyes, so that we might contemplate God's beauty and verify our actions with His divine commandments. God also opened our spiritual eyes so that we may help those, whose internal eyesight has not yet been opened, so that they may see the light of His presence in their lives and feel the hand of God in the various circumstances of their lives. We must show to those around us, by personal example, that God exists, and that He isn't someplace far away, but here, now, among us, and that God is

not indifferent towards our lives, but participates in them, helping us in every good deed, preventing many misfortunes and griefs, and leading us to the Kingdom of Heaven.

May God grant spiritual sight to all of us and protect us from ever falling into spiritual blindness. If the Lord has opened our eyes, then we must be especially attentive concerning ourselves and how we treat others, our neighbors. If a man who is spiritually blind is next to us, then we must remember that we must help this man to gradually be healed from his spiritual blindness. May God grant, as much as possible, that those around us would see the light of God's presence, and change from unbelievers into believers. May the Lord help the Church to grow and multiply, and may God lead more and more new people to faith and belief.

Translated by Archpriest Peter Olsen

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