

“ACCORDING TO YOUR FAITH LET IT BE DONE TO YOU”

By Metropolitan Hilarion (Alfeyev)

7th Sunday after Pentecost

July 31, 2011, Moscow, Church of the Icon of the Mother of God “Joy of All Who Sorrow”

We heard the Gospel reading today about how the Lord healed two blind men after they had cried out to Him, “Have mercy on us Jesus, Son of David!” (Matt. 9:27-31). The Lord asked them: “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” They answered: “Yes, Lord.” He then said: “According to your faith let it be done to you.” And at that moment they received their sight.

This story reminds us of the power of faith, and how faith transfigures life. A person who lacks faith is spiritually blind. He does not see his personal sins or the hand of God in his life. And even if he were to see a miracle with his own eyes, he would try to explain it as either a coincidence, or the result of natural causes. This is a person who is not touched by the grace of God because his heart is hardened, and his eyes do not see the divine light of God. Faith makes it possible to see the substance of things. It makes it possible for a person to see the divine providence of God in his own life. It opens his eyes to his own personal sins and imperfections, allows him to acknowledge them, to repent and to be healed from them, the same way that people are healed from physical illnesses.

Non-belief is an illness, but faith is spiritual health. Therefore, if we come into contact with a non-believer, and around us there are many such people, we must understand that we cannot place all the blame for their non-belief only on them. It may be an illness which was acquired, like an illness which is congenital (a disease or abnormality present from birth — trans.). For you see, we don't blame the ill because they are sick, but instead we want them to be well and, as much as we are able, we help them to try to be healed. It is the same in our relationship with non-believers. We must understand that non-belief is spiritual blindness. However, this is a blindness that can be healed, even if a person is born with this blindness. The healer is God and we are His helpers in this work. People will acquire faith and believe in God if they don't only hear beautiful words from us, but if they also see that we are living our lives as Christians, that we are keeping the commandments of God, and most importantly, if they see how faith in Christ transfigures our lives.

It is not possible to acquire faith and believe only because someone suggests that God exists. It is not possible to believe in God through reading books or by hearing persuasive words spoken by one or another person. At best, thanks to books, you can get the idea that God exists, but that God works in our life and opens the eyes of the blind, this you can only learn by personal religious experience. This is a great mystery which probably no one will ever be able to explain. Why do some people come to God and others do not? Why is it, that people living in the same world and in the same cities, living in similar circumstances and having the same occupations, why is it that some of them become believers and others do not?

Let us pray that the Lord, Who desires that all people would be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth, would lead to true faith those whom we know, and those whom we do not know, who are still spiritually blind, and whose inner eyes have not yet been opened in order to be able to contemplate the inexplicable divine light of God. Let us and each other place ourselves into the hands of God, and try to see the divine providence of God in the events in our lives. Let us beseech the Lord, that He will heal us not only from physical, but from spiritual illness as well.

Translated from the Russian by Archpriest Peter Olsen