

SERMON - Jesus Heals the Blind Man, Luke 18:35-43, Sunday, January 14, 2018

The story of salvation is the story of the healing of mankind. We are all engaged in an inner struggle for spiritual peace and understanding. Christianity would say that this is the struggle with sin, an internal conflict between darkness and light. Thus we are all in need of God's grace and power, to be victorious over the temptation to sin and to be healed from those passions and sins to which we have succumbed. Our salvation is the story of this life long journey from darkness to light. The Holy Scriptures are replete with examples of likening sin and spiritual illness to darkness, and salvation and the life in God to light. Even baptism is called "holy illumination." An example of this is given more than once in the Holy Gospel when Jesus heals a blind man. Because of our sins we are likened to being spiritually blind and walking in darkness. We have looked for fulfillment in the vanity of life: money, power, pleasure, appearances, impressing others, and getting our own way. We find it easy to think only of ourselves and our will, but so hard to live with the humility and selfless love of Christ. We define ourselves over against other people, and build ourselves up by putting them down and harboring resentment. So much of our life has been a wandering in darkness and we may have despaired of things ever getting any better. At times, we may not have the eyes to see any light at all. The spiritual blindness of our souls may be healed. If we develop the eyes to see it, we may leave behind our slavery to sin, our addiction to the passions, the distortion of ourselves that we have brought about. We may rise up from these darkened, pointless ways of living to the light, truth, and joy of the Kingdom of Heaven. We may share in Christ's eternal life, in His victory over sin and death, even now. But we have to be honest with ourselves. It is much easier to remain in the darkness than to move into the light. Deliverance and healing from our spiritual blindness, and the transformation of our lives into the light of Christ takes effort, hard work, perseverance, tension, struggle and turning away from temptations of whatever kind. Often when we are ill, we must go through a painful and arduous course of treatment in order to find relief from whatever it is that ails us. It could involve treatments that have side effects that are sometimes more difficult to bear than the illness itself. It is for this reason that the person being treated is called a "patient," because it takes patience to follow the prescribed course of treatment, a course that sometimes is long and difficult to navigate and endure. It is no different with the spiritual life and the good struggle for spiritual healing. Our Savior is the Great Physician who heals our souls. Having put our faith and trust in the Lord, we must patiently cooperate with the grace of His healing process. We will have to take and accept various medications. Some of them will be bitter and may result in distressful side effects. But we must trust the Physician who knows what we need for our healing. It is a strenuous process to wash away and be cleansed from the spiritual cancers and tumors of our soul and to wash away all the uncleanness that may have found a home in our hearts. The Physician does not only treat us, perform surgery on us and prescribe medications, but also gives us specific instructions as to what we must do on our part in order to complete the healing process. Every physician sends the patient home from the hospital with a list of instructions. Too often, we do not obey the clear instructions that Christ has given us for our spiritual healing: to love God with every bit of who we are and to love our neighbors as ourselves; to forgive those who have wronged us; to serve the poor, sick, and needy with every bit of attention that we should show to the Lord Himself; to close our eyes and ears to temptation; to shut our mouths when want to say something hateful; and to focus on our own failings instead of those of others. People who are ill are often required to keep a specific diet. Certain foods can exacerbate their condition, and in the worst case scenario, eating the wrong type of food can possibly even prove fatal. Fasting for our spiritual healing should also not be taken lightly, but we should try our best to keep the fasts of the church. Fasting means not only abstaining from certain types of food, but it also means lessening the portions and number of meals that we take. Fasting involves not only what and how much we put into our mouths, but paying attention to what comes out of our mouths, the words that proceed from our heart. Our fasting should be accompanied by almsgiving, confession and prayer. Prayer is

the greatest healer. Not praying is like taking the pills that keep us alive and throwing them away. We can become more ill and eventually die if we lack any key component of our healing process. Any physician will tell you that we don't have the luxury to choose only the parts of our treatment plan that we find convenient. Every part of our prescription is important and necessary. We should all wrestle seriously with the question of whether we are really doing what we can to open ourselves to the light of Christ. Are we obeying the Lord's instructions on how to find healing in our souls? Are we keeping a close watch on our thoughts and disregarding those that tempt us to sin? Are we following a rule of prayer and fasting that reorients our daily life toward God and helps us find healing from our passions? Are we preparing faithfully to receive our Lord's Body and Blood in the Holy Eucharist each Sunday? Do we take confession regularly and ask for the forgiveness of others whenever we wrong them? The brilliant light of Christ shines on us all and we must learn to accept the course of our lives, no matter how painful or disappointing, as our path to the Kingdom. Despite differences in life, circumstances and personalities, we all have the same kind of work to do: bit by bit, step by step, opening the eyes of our souls to a light so bright that we think it will blind us. But there is the irony: we are already blind. The light of Christ comes not to blind, but to give sight; not to condemn, but to save; not to kill, but to bring life eternal. He alone is our salvation and our hope. May each and every one of us allow the light of Christ to shine in the dark places of our lives. May Christ illuminate every dimension of who we are, and draw us ever more fully into the life of the One Who has conquered death and sin. Amen.

(Based and quoted from the Homily on the Sunday of the Blind Man by Priest Philip Lemasters, 25 May, 2014, from *Pravmir*,