



My Beloved Ones,

Χριστὸς ἀνέστη!

Christ is Risen!

For this Sunday's miraculous healing of the Blind Man, I ask us to carefully consider what lessons it has for us, especially when we think of our fellow Orthodox Christians & neighbors with disabilities.

Disabilities often make people uncomfortable, and since mankind has God-given reason, it is natural that our first instinct is to try to understand what it is we are seeing. This is what the Disciples do when they ask the Lord, "*Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?*" (John 9:2). In the ancient world, it was common to believe that sin could be passed down from parent to child, or even that a child could sin inside the womb. Even when we think about the healing of the Paralytic we

observed two weeks ago, our Lord told the man, "*Sin no more, lest nothing worse befall you*" (John 5:14). However, we must remember that the Blind Man can hear the Disciples' question, and their words hurt, especially as an adult man who now begs for help to live.

Our Lord takes the opportunity to challenge their view of disability: "*It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him*" (John 9:3). Of course, our Lord speaks of "*...the works of God...*" to announce the sign he is about to perform: He will create clay by mixing dust with His saliva, and He will anoint the Blind Man by telling him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. However, it is possible to see that "*...the works of God...*" also means how the Blind Man—and indeed, all those with physical and intellectual disabilities can show themselves to be icons of the living God through our own lives.

Let us reflect on the fact, that after the miracle, the Blind Man's neighbors feel his words are of so little meaning they ignore him: "*Others were saying, 'No [it is not the man], but it is someone like him.' He kept saying, 'I am the man.'*" (John 9:9). The Pharisees themselves are so arrogant that they ask the Blind Man twice to testify. Between their two questionings, they also speak with his parents, who are so afraid of being cast out of the Synagogue that they do not come to their son's defense. When the Blind Man continues to speak about Jesus as a great and powerful prophet of God, the Pharisees demonstrate their insensitivity towards his former disability by telling him, "*You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us? And they drove him out*" (John 9:34).

My beloved ones, even today, as fallen human beings, we often neglect those with differences, whether we intentionally or unintentionally. Like the Pharisees, we fear that

which we do not know, and often try to ignore unpleasant things. However, we know that Our Lord's ministry to bring salvation extends to the whole world, as He will commission His Disciples before the Ascension next week; but the spread of this faith was also because it spoke to those whom the rest of society cast aside, including those with disabilities. Our Lord sought to renew Creation in such a way that, through His life, death, and Resurrection, our own eyes would be able to see the true image and likeness of God in each one of our brothers and sisters—not with pity or fear, but with the ἀγάπη our Lord first showed to us. As we prepare to accept the Great Commission, let us prayerfully think about how we can minister, not to the ends of the earth, but even within our own families, neighborhoods, and communities. And so, for one last time,

Χριστὸς ἀνέστη!
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+ALEXIOS
Metropolitan of Atlanta