

The Christening of Creation

Gospel: John 9:1-38: *And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and came seeing. The neighbours therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged? Some said, This is he: others said, He is like him: but he said, I am he. Therefore said they unto him, How were thine eyes opened? He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight. Then said they unto him, Where is he? He said, I know not. They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind. And it was the sabbath day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes. Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see. Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them. They say unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes? He said, He is a prophet. But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight. And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? how then doth he now see? His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he*

was born blind: But by what means he now seeth, we know not; or who hath opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself. These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue. Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him. Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner. He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see. Then said they to him again, What did he to thee? how opened he thine eyes? He answered them, I have told you already, and ye did not hear: wherefore would ye hear it again? will ye also be his disciples? Then they reviled him, and said, Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is. The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes. Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing. They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out. Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.

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It seems that the incident of healing this man born blind was one of the most important miracles that Jesus performed. The Lord Jesus healed many people and performed many signs and miracles for blind men and

others, but this event had a special importance. The Jews looked upon it as a unique event. When Jesus came to raise Lazarus from the dead at Bethany, all the Jews had in mind what He did to the blind man. They were watching Jesus to see if he could raise a person dead for four days. The dead corpse already smelt. "And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?" (John 11:37). Then the healing of this man born blind is equivalent in power and proof to the raising of the dead, in terms of the power and authority of Jesus. These are main events that led to divisions among the Jews with regards to who Jesus was.

St. John wrote in his Gospel the sayings of Christ. He did not mention however many of Christ's miracles. He cited only five: those which pointed to more than just healing. St. John mentions the miracle of the Multiplication of Bread, for example, to introduce the words of Jesus, " I am the bread of life." Here, he recites the story of the blind man to silence those who refused Christ's words, " I am the light of the world." Those who could not bear hearing Him saying that He is equal to the Father tried to stone Him because, in their opinion, he was blaspheming. He calls Himself the "Existing One", being before Abraham. His words were clearly understood by the Jews. For them, Christ claimed to be equal to the Father, "I and [my] Father are one" (John 10:30 AV).

The movements of Jesus during the healing of the Blind man answer the doubts of the people, proving that He is Himself God and Creator, and that He is Jehovah. He spat on the ground and made with his hand clay of the spittle. By doing so, He gave "life" to the eyes of the

blind man. He made a mold with His hands and gave life as is written in the Book of Genesis, when Jehovah created the first man and life.

Jehovah, the Creator, the light of the world, entered the world to do the works of His Father Who sent Him. What is the work of the Father after the first creation? It is exactly what we celebrate on the day of Pascha! It is the remolding of man, the renewal of Creation, or creating the world again. This is why the Church put this Gospel passage in the series of Gospels read right after the Sunday of the Resurrection. All this important mission however will not be done solely by God the Creator, as happened in the Book of Genesis. The Lord assigns the mission to the newly created man. The latter will not bring nonexistence to existence, but will make what exists better. Man is the priest of the universe. His mission is to transform the materialistic creation into a spiritual universe. This great work for example, transforms eyesight into perception, and makes the healing of his eyes a reason to see the Lord. The Church hymns emphasize through the mouth of the blind man that the biological eyesight given as a gift by God became the cause for his spiritual perception, seeing the Lord Jesus and worshipping Him.

This is the hidden event in this paragraph, that a material creation (healing of the blind) became a new creation, seeing the Lord. After this passage, and exactly at the end of this event, the Lord Jesus declares, saying, "And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind" (John 9:39 AV). This is what was realized in the soul of the blind man and his parents.

All creation, and everything that is material, is a tool for sanctification and a mission, not a purpose. Health, eyesight, money, children, science, and the good things, even hardship and difficulties are mediums through which we ought to see Christ, thus forming our spiritual eyesight. This is the second creation out of the first one, which was materialistic. When the material remains materialistic, we destroy it and deprive it of its right to life. The man who does not deal with anything in a spiritual way destroys its worth and turns it away from its purpose. He himself will turn from being a priest to being a killer and a thief.

This creativity in creation, the christening of the world and the material things in it, is the mission of Man and the Christian call to renew creation. The priesthood of man transforms creation into the Kingdom of God, and not just an earthly kingdom. All gifts or talents not directed towards this purpose lose their meaning. Man without this purpose loses his noble goal and human and rightful call.

What is the purpose of money? Of civilization? Of cultures? Of potentials? Of ambition? What are, at the end, the goals? There is no answer that deserves all the hard work of man, except to recreate the creation and renew it. Everything is a tool and a way to christening the world.

We hope that we all may say: "I believe O Lord through everything, and I worship You in everything."

Amen.