

Homily for the 7th Sunday after Pentecost

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In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, One God.

In today's Gospel reading we hear about Jesus Christ our Lord healing two blind men.

When the two blind men approach Him and ask for healing, Jesus Christ our God asks them, 'Do you believe that I am able to do this?'

When they answer in the affirmative, Christ heals them and proclaims, "According to your faith let it be to you."

Faith is a constant theme in the Gospels. When Christ heals an infirmity, He states, time and time again, "Your faith has made you well!"

When he heals the servant of the centurion, Christ attributes the healing to the faith of the centurion. When he heals the woman with the issue of blood, He attributes the healing to her faith.

The words "your faith has made you well" contain a very important message: if we want to benefit from our relationship with God, we must be faithful, we must believe.

God is truly omnipresent. He is truly all merciful. When we come to church, He is here. When we get in the car, he is there. When we are at work or at home, he is there. Wherever we are, He is there.

When we sin, and when we do good things, He is there! When we go to sleep, and when we wake up, He is there! He loves us unconditionally and He loves the whole world whether we know Him or not.

As with the two blind men, the Lord has given us the opportunity to heal the blindness of the eye of our soul.

God has given us a sure and prescribed path toward our healing, our growth, and salvation through His Church. He teaches us how to pray through the Church.

He feeds us with the Sacrament through the Church, He teaches us the disciplines of the ascetic life: fasting and prayer through the Church, and He gives us Confession through the Church as a means to be purified, so that we may continue to learn and entrust more of ourselves to Him who is the Great Physician.

And these are the means through which we can progress in the knowledge and love of God.

This progress in the knowledge and love of God is always meant to be active, never inactive. If we want to have a chance of becoming deified, we have to be active Christians.

We all know that it is very to get sidetracked. It is very easy to have our own opinions and our own ways, which are not always those of the Church.

We cannot all become monastics or priests, but we should not just live a secular life because it is much easier; easier than living in the footsteps of Christ.

Of course it is easier to take Orthodoxy on our terms. So we can pick and choose what we like and discard the things we do not like.

Let me tell you one thing: that is not Christianity, and it definitely will NOT bring us the healing we need.

Through His Church, Christ has given us an extremely important means to find healing from our spiritual sickness. That means is the Sacrament of Repentance.

This consists of Confession, and the subsequent reception of the Eucharist, Holy Communion.

It is for this reason that the Church encourages us to take regular confession so that we can enjoy the benefits of regular reception of the Eucharist.

The Eucharist is also known as “the Medicine of Immortality”, because it unites us with Christ Himself and heals our souls.

But this can only happen if we receive in faith, through preparation and purification, which is itself a part of that Medicine. The Church teaches us that Confession and Reception go hand in hand.

The prayers for reception of the Eucharist ask for confession and its purification as a preparation for worthily receiving Christ’s precious and all-holy Body and Blood.

And so through all of this, we see that our healing of the soul demands something of our material bodies, our time, our energy, our worship, our prayers, our heartfelt repentance and requires us to turn to Christ our God, just like the blind men did when they cried out, “Lord, have mercy on us.”

By the power of the Holy Spirit working through the Sacrament of Confession, we learn the root causes of the sins that cause us to stumble, that cause us and others sadness and pain, our pride and false dependence on ourselves.

In order to grow in confidence in our identity and self-worth in Christ, we need to peel away the layers of our souls to reveal the core of our struggles, the passions and self-will that holds us back.

Confession is truly a gift from God. But this type of soul searching, demands a necessary humility and willingness on our part to accept healing from God.

We have to spend time in prayer, self-examination, and worship, to make the most of the Sacrament and the healing and growth that God would offer us through it.

Our ongoing willingness to be healed, to progress in our healing, is an integral part of our salvation.

Saint James teaches us that we are saved through our belief (faith) that manifests itself through our actions and deeds, the living out of that faith. Faith and works go hand in hand.

Saint Seraphim of Sarov said the following about the above words of Saint James. “The works of faith are: love, peace, long-suffering mercy, humility, rest from all works (as God Himself rested from His works), bearing of the cross, and life in the Spirit. Only such faith can be considered true. True faith cannot be without works; one who truly believes will unfailingly have works as well.”

We cannot afford to lay aside our struggle with sin and lay aside our obedience to what Christ teaches us through His Church.

Christ asks the blind men, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” We have been shown the way if we want to make use of it.

We should all pray for one another in the hope that we will all continue to make use of the means for our salvation, which Christ offers us through His Church for our growth, our healing and our salvation.

As we grow, individually and as a community in our reflection of Christ and the Kingdom, we must also help others find their healing and salvation in Christ, through our example.

We should all concentrate ourselves in following Christ with all that we have, all that we are, crying out to Him as did the blind men, “Lord, have mercy on us,” knowing that He is the Lord who loves us and indeed has mercy on our souls.

Nearly 2 millennia ago, Jesus Christ our God healed every infirmity and disease in people, just like He healed these two blind men in today's Gospel reading, who had unwavering faith in Him.

Today, our Lord Jesus Christ still heals all who have faith in Him throughout the entire world, with that same Divine power, granting them peace, true joy, and salvation.

Let us believe Him, just as the two blind men believed Him. Let us all be faithful like the two blind men in our faith and love for Him. And let us glorify and honour His most wondrous and majestic Divine Name.

Amen.