

The risen Christ must become our entire life

By Bishop Milan Lach, SJ

Jesus Christ rose from the dead. This is the great mystery of Pascha. In today's Gospel, Christ offers us a little Pascha in the healing of the two blind men and the infirm.

Every illness is some kind of death. If somebody is blind or ill, it is an expression of death. It is a recognition of the human limits that everyone has, myself included.

The Messiah came to ransom us not just from earthly tyrants, but from the tyrannical limits of death itself.

The two blind men recognize Jesus as this saving Messiah. We hear in the Gospel of Matthew that the blind man was calling to Jesus, "Son of David, have mercy on me" (9:27).

What does it mean to say "Son of David"? It was a prophecy of the Old Testament. For the blind man to say, "Son of David," means that he was awaiting the King of kings, the fulfillment of all prophecy.

Even today, the Jewish people await the Messiah. Yet, we Christians know that Christ is the Messiah. Not only is he the Son of David, but the Son of God.

This is a wonderful thing: all the promises of the Old Testament are fulfilled in Jesus Christ because he is Lord. He is God. He is the Son of God. He does not just occupy the earthly throne of David, but he is enthroned upon the cherubim in the heavenly courts.

In response, what question does Jesus the Messiah ask the blind man? "Do you think that it should be possible?" (Mt 9:28). In other words, Jesus is asking, "How is your faith?"

This is a very important question, not just for the blind man, but for all of us.

How is your faith? Do you experience it in your life when you are at home or during the week with your family?

Do you feel that your faith is present at your job? Do you think your faith is present when you are driving on the highway, for example? In restaurants? When you watch TV? Are the programs you watch appropriate for Christians?

To say, "I am a believer" is a big thing. We are believers not in some idea or in some ideology — there are some people who think that Christianity is an ideology, but this is a big mistake — but our faith is in God, our Lord, the King of kings, who has the capacity to offer eternal life, not only life on Earth, but even after death.

The day of resurrection, every Sunday, is a sign, a reminder for us that Jesus Christ is life, that Jesus Christ is risen!

It is an encounter with the Messiah, to whom the blind men cried on the side of the road. But we must not limit this celebration of the resurrection to Sunday, nor do we celebrate Pascha only for 40 days; it must be for the whole year.

The fact that Jesus Christ is risen must become our life, everywhere and at all times.

This brings us to a fundamental question, brothers and sisters. We must ask, “Who is Jesus Christ for you and me?”

From this point of view, we make all other decisions — in your marriages, in your relationships with your sons and daughters, with our parents, in our neighborhoods, with our brothers and sisters here in church, and even with our brothers and sisters who are not present here.

Jesus must be the Messiah for us. When we celebrate the offering of the Divine Liturgy, we always sing, “Lord have mercy.” What we mean is, “Jesus we need you. We need you in our life, for without you, we are blind, we are dead.”

We repeatedly sing, “Lord have mercy,” in order to restate our need for God, for without God, we remain blind.

Remember this when you feel weak. Jesus Christ, the Messiah, is this strength for you.

“Z’nami Boh” — God with us. The devil may try to say it is false, but this is our true condition: with God, we are strong.

God bless you,
+ Bishop Milan

Bishop Milan Lach’s first Voice of the Shepherd is based on his first homily at the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist, delivered July 23.

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