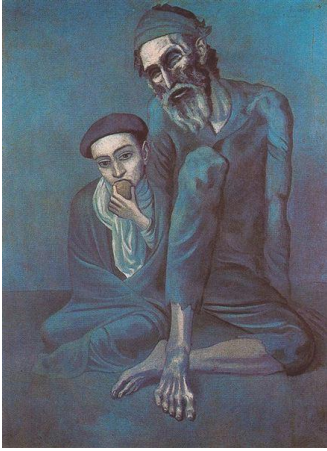


***“The earth takes shape like clay under a seal; its features stand out like those of garment. The wicked are denied their light, and their upraised arm is broken.”***

(Job 38-14)



*“Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” (John 9:1-38)*

A similar question was asked on Friday when we reflected on the gospel together. One of the new volunteers asked emotionally why God allows certain things to happen to people. She asked that with pain. She was part of a new group of refugees from Ghana, who came to work and give a helping hand in our community. We often hear this question, spoken or unspoken, and we are afraid to answer. People have the right to ask this question and be heard... even though at times they feel they are listened to only by the silence of God.

The blind man was born with the longing for God’s touch. He was made to be touched by God. Thomas needed to touch the healing wounds of God to believe, in this case it is God who is touching the brokenness of the human body to receive a testimony. And by doing so He is not betrayed in His kindness by the man He heals: *“Lord, I believe”; and he worshiped him.*

On the surface, it seems unwise for Christ to rely on the witness of people in this way; like that blind man who was a beggar or like the other man, “that tax collector”; to receive a testimony from the prostitutes, the poor, from the sinners. How is their witness going to change anything? Who is going to listen to them? At the end we see that the blind man was thrown out of the synagogue. His testimony did not change the heart of the authorities, on the contrary, it gave them more fuel because it was made by a man who was born in sins.

We see all the time the lack of value of “these people” in the eyes of those who can “see clearly” what the problem is with them. Their discreditation is oppressive and harmful for any human soul that takes time to look at it. But more so for those who feel it firsthand. It is a humiliation that presses down the being more and more each day. It hurts more and it does more damage than the condition itself, whatever that might be. How is it then that God counts on them to give testimony? *“Give God the praise...”*

***“What is the way to the abode of light? (Job 38)***

Last Sunday we saw Jesus weary by the fountain, where He rested after the confrontation with the Pharisees. Today it is the same. They want to stone Him just before He meets the blind

beggar. But He passes by them because His time had not come yet. The pharisees do not reject only the confession of the blind beggar. The religious authorities would not believe even their own brothers risen from the death (see Lazarus parable). They do not believe Jesus either.

What is it then that they do not believe?

***"Is not this the man who used to sit and beg?" Some said, "It is he"; others said, "No, but he is like him." He said, "I am the man."***

After recovering his sight, something else changed in the body of the blind beggar. Somehow, he reminds us of Jesus' appearance after the resurrection. It is Him but He does not look the same. Is he the gardener, the traveler, the one who cooks on the shore, a stranger and yet Christ himself? Jesus tells the apostles to come and touch Him and see that He has flesh and bones, "It is I". The blind man did not only recover his sight, but he changed in such a way that people cannot fully recognize him. A restoration of his being occurred through the healing of his eyes. The one who puts a seal on the clay for an icon to appear, completes in him the creation that is not only very good now, but it also passes the test of temptation.

*"Is this not a marvelous thing that you do not know?"* He was tested, in the same way the serpent tested Eve: by doubting God.

The place where the light abides is the face of man. The light searches until it finds the icon who reminds it of its very origin. Out of obedience, the light would rest on the face of man who cannot see, with the same candour as it would rest on the perfect icon. However, the obedience of light shares fully in the restoration of the icon. Because the darkness cannot comprehend it anymore. And the light does not need to rest anymore on the face of man out of necessity but out of love only.

In a world and a corrupt system where death reigns, there is no belief that God is working today. There is no belief that the restoration happens. The authorities would hate Jesus as much as they would hate the miracles and His love for the poor. Because He changes us in the image and the likeness of His glory. The restoration is completed because the one who is restored gives a complete witness of the presence of God within his people. The system does not want to see, and it does not want to believe that. It is afraid of its own destruction and its own forgiveness. The healing of the blind beggar today is a prefiguration of the resurrection as it is a prefiguration also of our healing when we put on a new garment of light. There is a change and a restoration of the human being in a world that is killing its own children. And this restoration happens through the flowing of the Holy Spirit in His church where those who are restored first are indeed the blind beggars, the sinners, the tax collectors, the prostitutes and the poor. The question of the suffering of innocence is comprehended, never answered, but only comprehended within the resurrection of Christ and in the full restoration of the human nature. Yes, there is today real life, there is real change and real witness, because the light of the

resurrection does not rest on the brick of dawn but restores within the heart of the poor the perfect image of Christ.

The gospel of today reminds me of a visit, a few years ago, of some old friends of our community, who were present at its very beginning. I remember their surprise at finding some of the older people still here and being even more surprised to see Angela and how she has changed.

“Is that her?” “No, I don’t think so.” And yet, nobody could mistake Angela, for some things remain the same and yet some changes are puzzling. I could not know what they saw but I could see the joy and the hope in their eyes.

It remains for us to hope that our own restoration is happening and that, in time, people would have the same difficulty to recognize us as our friends had with Angela. And that they would rather mistake us for the janitors, for the homeless people or for those who live with a disability or without uniform. Because in this way we would know if our witness had any truth in it. And if, when the time comes, we would not have many friends left to remember us the way we were in the past and how we are now, we could only hope that our guardian angel would have a hard time to recognize us when we’ll be lost outside, looking for the entrance into the garden. And that would be our consolation.

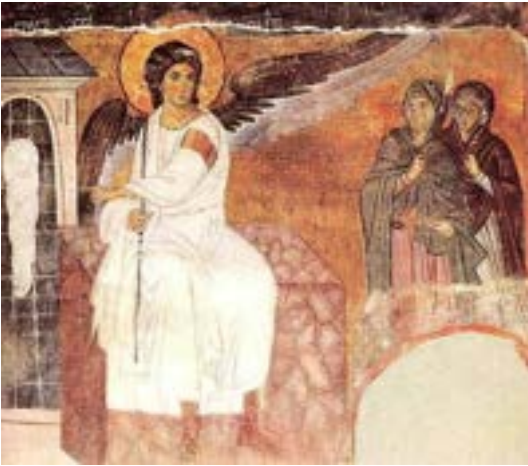
### **Memory Eternal Kelly !**

Kelly died probably early last week, as we found out from the police officers who came over several times, asking many questions. They were looking for somebody and had a suspicion they did not want to share. In the beginning we didn’t know who they were looking for, because they used a different name. They called her “Troy” and showed us a picture of when she had been arrested. I asked, out of curiosity, why they were calling her by a different name. “I don’t care how they want to be called... I call them the way I t hey want; I have no problem...”

The police knew Kelly in their own way, we knew her from within the church where a change happened within her heart every time she stepped in. We are witnesses of that change and transformation, which the system has no interest in hearing. We keep this witness in prayer as we pray for her soul.



The police officers promised br Luke that they will help us to bury Kelly's body, once the investigation is completed. Kelly was a poor soul that saw much evil in her life. However, she brought it to light within the church which she loved. Looking not for her own redemption but for the forgiveness of others. Memory Eternal !



### **Community project**

Tatyana is going to work on a project of changing the panel frescoes outside the mission (see icon on the left). Please let us know if you want to help in any way. This project requires commitment, good heart and working hands.

### **Announcements:**

There will be no psalm study on Zoom this Tuesday evening.

Wednesday, during the day, father Demetri, who will be visiting us from St Matthew Orthodox church in Pittsburgh, is available for hearing confessions. This year during lent we did not have a visiting priest for confession, so please take this opportunity to go to confession to a visiting priest. A sign up sheet is found in the vestibule.

Wednesday 6:30 pm - leave taking of Pascha  
Singing of the pascal canon followed by procession  
followed by vespers and divine liturgy for the feast of the Ascension  
Father Demetri will preach that evening

Thursday 6:30 pm - Father Demetri will lead a reflection on his work in prisons, as well as with people with addictions and other social challenges. This event is open to the whole community and is hosted by St Macrina Counselling Services.

Friday 7:00 am - Divine Liturgy

Please use the antidoron bags. If you don't know what the antidoron is for, ask Miroslava.



**St Silouan Chapel at St John's Mission**

155 Broadview Ave. Toronto, ON M4M 2E9

T: 416-466-1357 E: info@stjohnsmmission.org W: stjohnsmmission.org

**St Zoticos Orthodox Church at Good Neighbours Mission**

193 Markham Rd Scarborough, ON M1J 3C3

T: 647-358-4105



We are an apostolate of the ecumenical patriarchate "Mother Church of Christ's poor" under  
the Omophorion of Metropolitan Gregory of Nyssa

St. Silouan Chapel, June 9, 2024

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