

SUNDAY OF THE MAN BORN BLIND



Icon of the Gospel of the Man Born Blind

A REFLECTION ON OUR READINGS FOR THIS WEEKEND

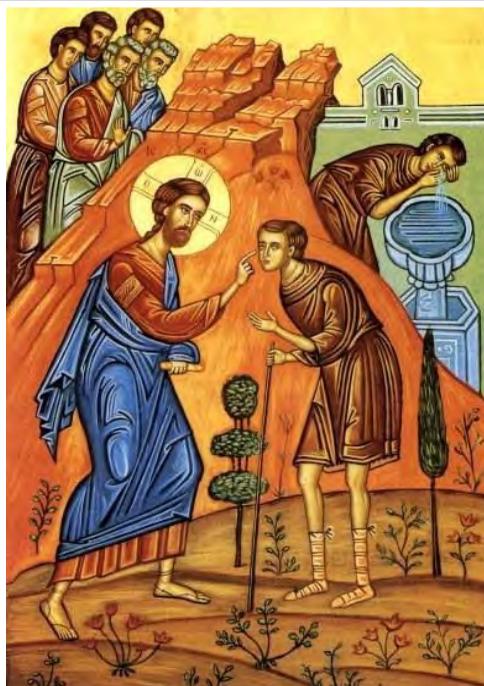
On this last weekend of our celebration of Pascha, our readings are again taken from the ACTS and John's Gospel. The pairing of these two readings is quite unique and also complicated.

The story presented in the passage from ACTS deals with the event of Paul's and Silas' imprisonment for not only preaching the Good News but also silencing the slave girl who had a clairvoyant spirit. Her master made money off of her predictions.

What is very interesting is that the slave girl declared the complimentary truth about Paul and Silas. She is quoted as saying: "These men are servants of the Most High God: they will make known to you a way of salvation." For some reason this annoyed Paul. We are not given any reason why he became annoyed. This was the complaint that her masters gave to the magistrate: "These men are agitators disturbing the peace of our city. Furthermore, they are Jews, which means they advocate customs which are not lawful for us Romans to adopt or practice.

The miracle story that John reports is about Jesus curing a MAN BORN BLIND. As I thought about it this year, I realized that all of us are born blind with regards to the true meaning and purpose of life. I truly believe that Jesus can give us sight into life's meaning and purpose. We only have to study His life, His attitudes and His way of thinking to discover life's meaning and purpose.

Jesus revealed that God had a definite idea about how humans should live in order



to benefit from this earthly life. I think that most people would agree with me that this life can be quite challenging and, of course, confusing since it is so complex and is filled with so very many unknowns.

Believing in something and/or someone can help! Why? Because beliefs are not based on proven facts but, rather, are those things that we embrace to make sense out of this life. Jesus did make known the way of SALVATION. Salvation is truly knowing what you have to do in order to make the most out of this earthly life!

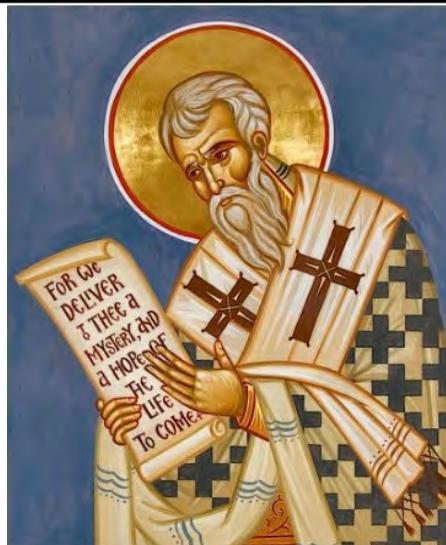
THE RESURRECTION OF THE HUMAN BODY

I ended this article in last week's Bulletin by sharing that Cyril maintains that Christ could have revealed His body in "its due and proper glory" immediately following His Resurrection but that the disciples would not have been able to bear such a manifestation. Cyril illustrates this point by referring to the reaction of the three disciples on the mount, who were unable to endure the vision of the transfigured Christ.

Interestingly, St. Cyril also maintains that Christ breathed the Holy Spirit on His disciples on the first day of His Resurrection. Now this at first sight appears to suggest that the disciples, well before the Ascension, were in fact ready for the vision of Christ in glory. But this, according to Cyril, is not the case. It is clear that in St. Cyril the period between the Resurrection and the Ascension is seen as one of preparation for the disciples. (At this point the dynamic nature of the life in Christ in St. Cyril becomes apparent). St. Cyril says that the Holy Spirit had been dwelling in and sanctifying the disciples since the first appearance of Christ in Jerusalem, so as to prepare them for the Ascension - the vision of Christ glorified - Pentecost, and all that was to follow.

In St. Cyril, then, it is the Transfiguration glory that is a foreshowing of that vision of Christ glorified which man has been capable of receiving since the Ascension. Consequently, the Ascension marks for Cyril a most important turning point in the history of man's receptiveness to the vision of God.

We must consider the fascinating corollary to this assertion: that man is, subsequent to the Ascension, capable of both receiving and enduring the vision of Christ glorified. Explicit

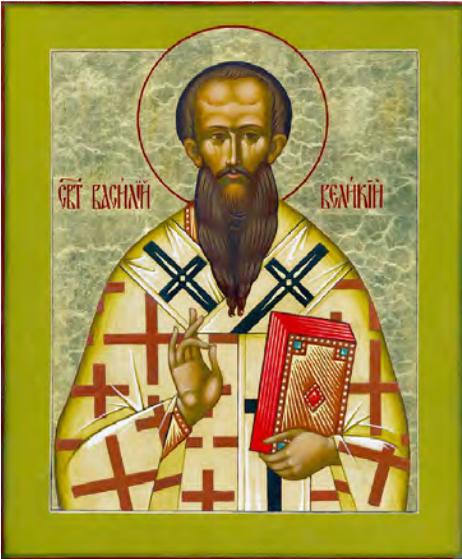


ST CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA

scriptural accounts of post-Ascension visions of Christ are relatively few. Most of these are either directly or indirectly connected with the Conversion of St. Paul. They are: the Martyrdom of Stephen the Protodeacon; the Conversion of Saul; the Vision of Ananias; the Foundation of the Church in Corinth; St. Paul's Vision in the Temple; and following St. Paul's appearance before the Sanhedrin; to which an explicit reference to the vision of Christ in 2 Corinthians 4:6 may be added. Also the vision of St. John the Divine (Revelations 1:12-18).

More to come!

ST BASIL'S THOUGHTS ON GENESIS



ST BASIL THE GREAT

I truly realize that this article on St. Basil's interpretation of Genesis may, at times, be a little dense because of its parsing of words, nevertheless it do believe that it gives us a different feeling about Genesis. It was not a history that was dictated by God to an author about the creation of man and the universe. This is very evident.

I ended the article with beginning thoughts on DAY TWO of creation: let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters. The word here rendered *expanse* is the Hebrew *raqia* (in some editions of the Old Testament used for *firmament*)

To understand this act of creation, we must recall that in the prior state of *tohu* and *bohu*, all was sea and deep waters. On Day One, daylight was created, but it came and went upon a submerged world. Here God brings order by making a dry space in the midst of the waters. HE decrees that there be an *expanse* which would *separate the waters* below *from the waters* above. Obviously such an expanse would have to be solid in nature to hold up the waters above and keep them from all falling back down to the waters below. And that is just how the ancient Near East regarded the skies - as something solid.

This is clear enough from the rest of the Scriptures. In Ezekiel 1:22f, Ezekiel in his vision saw "the likeness of an expanse (*raqia*) shining like crystal, upon which stood God's throne. Obviously the expanse had to be fairly solid to support the divine throne. Job 37:18 describes the sky (*shehaqim*) as "hard as a molten mirror." Indeed, the noun *raqia* comes from the verb *raqa*, "to hammer out." In Exodus 39:3 the verb describes the process of hammering out gold plate for use in the tabernacle shrine.

So we see that the Genesis description of creation reflects the view that ancients had, which is totally different from our understanding because of the advancement of science. When you think about how the ancients saw creation, you quickly realize that Genesis is not to be taken as scientifically accurate or real. It was based on the primitive ideas that people had about the world and about humankind.

More to follow!

St. Michael's Parish News

A Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Dearborn Michigan



THE ASCENSION

Thursday, May 30th
DIVINE LITURGY - 7 PM



This coming Thursday, our Church will celebrate the Feast of the Ascension of Our Lord into Heaven. This

is a major feast and brings an end to our celebration of the Lord's Resurrection.

PLEASE NOTE that I will be celebrating an **evening Liturgy** that day so that more members may have a chance to attend.

ADULT DISCUSSION

Next Sunday, June 2nd

Please join us after the Divine Liturgy next week to take part in our discussion about **END OF LIFE ISSUES.**

AN IMPORTANT TOPIC

Only I can change my life. No one can do it for me.

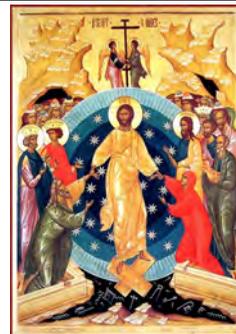
A CALL TO HOLINESS

The call to holiness is a call to find and understand the meaning and purpose of life. All of us, I know, secretly have our own ideas about life's meaning and purpose. The problem is that our understanding is tainted by our experiences, our fantasies and our thoughts about how we think life should be. We humans typically are afraid of challenges, change, pain and disappointments. As a result, we create a false idea about the meaning and purpose of life and invent a meaning that does not serve us well because it is not based in reality.

I find that so very many people question why life is the way that it is. Why should we be born without any knowledge and why should we have to change. Of course God could have created us like the angels and we would never have to change. He didn't! Why? Because He gave us free will and He wanted us to be able to voluntarily return His love.

This is, of course, why centuries ago the Jewish people invented the story of Adam and Eve. This is why so many want to believe that Adam and Eve offended God and therefore all of humankind must suffer. This approach to the creation of human life distorts the meaning and purpose of life. Our present life is not a punishment because of what someone else did at the beginning of human history. Our life is this wonderful design of growth and progress

(Continued on page 8)



OUR MOST IMPORTANT DOCTRINE: THE TRIUNE GOD

The Cappadocian Fathers adopted the formulation which would remain the criterion of Trinitarian theology in the East: God is one essence in three hypostases (individual persons). This Cappadocian settlement, given the circumstances of the fourth century, never pretended to be anything more than the best possible *description* of the divine mystery, not the solution of a philosophical process, similar to the Plotinian “Trinity of hypostases.” The Fathers always affirmed that we cannot know *what* God is, only *that He is*, because He has revealed Himself - in salvation history - as Father, Son and Spirit. God is Trinity, “and this fact can be deduced from no principle nor explained by any sufficient reason for there are neither principles nor causes anterior to the Trinity.

Why then are *this* description and this terminology preferable to others? Mainly because all the options then available seemed inadequate from the start. The formula “one essence, three *prosopa*,” for example, was not able to exclude a modalistic Trinity (the doctrine that the persons of the Trinity represent only three modes or aspects of the divine revelation, not distinct and coexisting persons in the divine nature), since the term *prosopon*, although commonly used to designate “person,” could also mean “mask” or “appearance.” The Cappadocian Fathers, meanwhile, wanted to definitely affirm simultaneously that God is one object and



and three objects, that both His unity and His trinity are full realities. “When I speak of God,” writes Gregory of Nazianzus, “you must be illumed at once by one flash of light and by three. Three in properties, in hypostases or Persons, if any prefer so to call them, for we will not quarrel about names so long as the syllables amount to the same meaning; but one in respect of the *ousia* (a philosophical and theological term, originally used in Ancient Greek philosophy, and also in Christian theology. ... The Ancient Greek term **Ousia** is translated in English as essence or substance) that is, the Godhead.

THE FEAST OF THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD

The Feast of Our Lord's Ascension takes place forty days after His Resurrection. In the Bible, next to the number seven, the number 40 occurs most frequently. In Talmudical literature it is often met with, in many instances having been apparently used as a round number or as a concrete and definite expression in place of the abstract and indefinite "many" or "some," and hence becoming a symbolical number. As regards the period of forty years, the Jews seem to have shared with other peoples, especially the Greeks, the notion that the fortieth year was the height or acme (the point at which someone or something is best, perfect, or most successful) of man's life; and from this fact forty years came to represent a generation.

Sources of the first three centuries do not speak of this feast. Not even the writer Origen mentions it, although he lists the Christian feasts in the one of his writings. Liturgical experts are of the opinion that in the first three centuries the celebration of this feast was combined with that of the feast of the Descent of the Holy Spirit (Pentecost). Silvia Egeria does not call this feast the Ascension but only the fortieth day after the resurrection.

In the fourth century this feast became an universal feast, celebrated everywhere. The historian Socrates calls it a "general feast".

The feast was highly extolled in the sermons of John Chrysostom, Gregory of Nyssa, Epiphany of Cyprus, Leo the Great and others. In the fourth century Queen Helena erected a church at the place of Christ's Ascension.



The spirit of the services of the feast, as a whole, is uplifting and joyful. The Church rejoices at the glory of Christ (God and Man), who is now seated at the right hand of the Father. He ascended into heaven, in order to send us the Comforter - the Holy Spirit - and

to "prepare a place for us," as He promised.

Some years ago I was inspired to create this phrase: **LIFE'S JOURNEY IS AN ASCENSION TO THE HEAVENLY FATHER.** I truly believe that as we look at the life of Jesus, we realize that His entire life was a "journey" back to the Heavenly Father, thus revealing to us the meaning and purpose of this earthly existence. The way that we make this journey is through personal change/transformation. This is how we make our "ascension" to the Heavenly Father.

Schedule of Services

**Sunday, May 26 - Weekend of the Man Born Blind
10:00 AM - Special Intention**

SIXTH PASCHAL WEEK

**Monday, May 27 - Therapont, Bishop-Martyr - MEMORIAL DAY
8:00 AM - Special Intention**

Tuesday, May 28 - Nicetas, Bishop
No Service Scheduled

**Wednesday May 29 - Theodosia, Venerable Martyr
8:00 AM - Special Intention**

**Thursday, May 30 - FEAST OF THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD
***** 7:00 PM - Special Intention - CHECK THE TIME**

Friday, May 31 - Hermas, Apostle - Hermeas, Martyr
No Service Scheduled

Saturday, June 1 - Justin & Others, Martyrs
No Service Scheduled

**Sunday, June 2 - Weekend of the Fathers of Nicaea
10:00 AM - Special Intention**

St. Michael the Archangel
Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church
6340 Chase Road
Dearborn, MI 48126

Rev. Wayne J. Ruchgy, Ph.D.
Pastor

Rectory: (313) 582-1424
Cell: (313) 580-4412
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LITURGY SCHEDULE

Sundays @ 10:00 AM
Ukrainian & English

Weekdays @ 8:00 AM
English

SACRAMENTS

Penance
By Appointment

Baptism & Matrimony
*In most instances membership
required for six months*

Funerals
*Membership of an immediate family
member required*

Parish Life Council

Bob & Corinne Boyko
734.451.1893

John & Janet Dicky
586.755.3129

Daria Drobny
313.791-0292

Robert Krokosky
248.431.9554

Leo & Mary LaDouceur
313.278.7378

Gordon Malaniak
734.564.9817

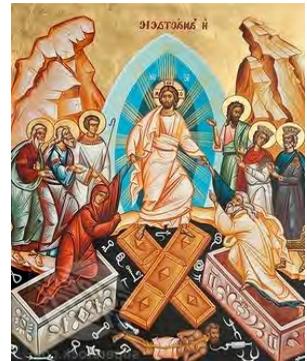
Leonard Mier
313.584-6795

Greg & Esther Petrovich
734.453-4354

Rafic Vawter
313.624.9867

(Continued from page 5 - the Call to holiness)

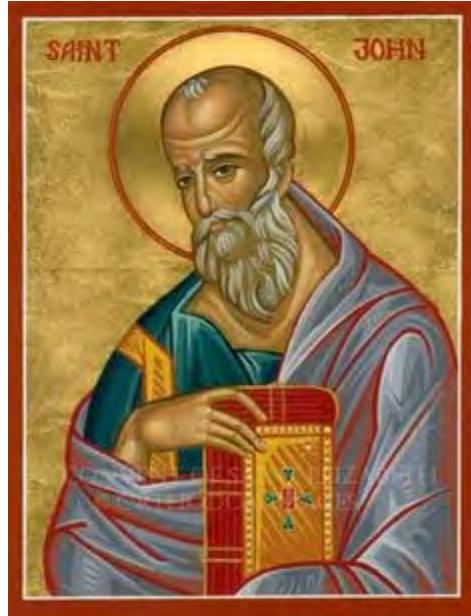
Which can only be achieved through a process of dealing with a variety of challenges, struggles, disappointments, failures and successes. Growth can only come if we are challenged. If we are never challenged we will never grow or change and, therefore, never become the persons that God intended when He created us. I know that many people don't like to hear this. They want life to be simply an experience of joy and happiness, successes and, of course, accomplishments. If life were like this, I truly believe that humans would be absolutely miserable and come to realize that they are not free but, rather, only very, very fancy, living robots. ***What do you think?***



<http://www.stmichaelarchangel.org> - and - [Facebook.com/stmichaelugccdbn](https://www.facebook.com/stmichaelugccdbn)

MORE ABOUT ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST

St. John the Apostle and Evangelist, is known for several different things. First he is noted for his deep love of God as is evident in his Gospel and three Epistles. He is also known for his devotion to our Lord and Savior, called the “beloved” disciple. It is reported that he was asked by Jesus Himself to be the “caretaker” of Mary, Jesus’ mother. Second, he is known for his portrayals of Christ in his writings as the Love and Uncreated Light of God. He was one of only three people in the history of the Church who is formally designated as a “Theologian.” The other two are Gregory the Great and the Theologian, and St. Symeon.



ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST

Third, he is one of the four Holy Evangelists of the New Testament, the author of the 4th Holy Gospel. He is iconographically symbolized by “The Eagle” because of his soaring theology and portrayal of Christ in his Gospel.

Finally, was one of only three Holy Apostles who were chosen to go up to the Mount Tabor to witness the Holy Transfiguration of our Lord.

St. John was a Galilean, the son of

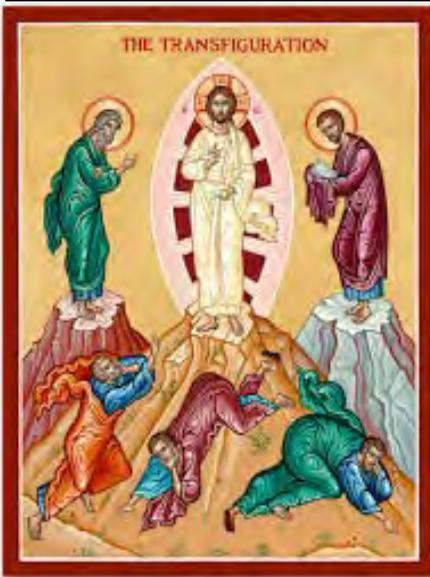
Zebedee and Salome, and younger brother of St. James the Great, with whom he was brought up to be a fisherman. Before his coming to Christ he seems to have been a disciple to St. John the Baptizer, several thinking him to have been that other disciple that was with St. Andrew when they left St. John to follow Jesus.

So particularly does our Evangelist relate all the circumstances, through modestly concealing his own name, as in other parts of the gospel. He was properly called to be a disciple of our Lord, with his brother James, as they were mending their nets, on the same day, and soon after Jesus had called Peter and Andrew.

These two brothers continued still to follow their fishing trade, but upon seeing the miraculous draught of fishes, they left all things to attach themselves more closely to Jesus. Christ gave them the surname of Boanerges, or sons of thunder, to express the strength and activity of their faith in publishing the law of God without fearing the power of man.

More to follow!

UNDERSTANDING THEOSIS - DEIFICATION



The closest English equivalent of *Theosis* is *deification*. In Christian theology, *Theosis* refers to the transformation of believers into the likeness of God. Of course, Christian monotheism goes against any literal “god making” of believers. Rather, the New Testament (NT) speaks of a transformation of mind, a metamorphosis of character, a redefinition of selfhood, and an imitation of God. Most of these passages are brief, and non spells out the concept in detail.

Deification was truly an important idea in the early Church, though it took a long time for *Theosis* to emerge as

the standard label for the process. The term was coined by the great fourth century theologian, Gregory of Nazianzus (one of the Cappadocian Fathers). Theologians now use *Theosis* to designate all instances where any idea of taking on God’s character of being “divinized” occurs, even when the term *Theosis* is not used. And of course, different Christian authors understood deification differently.

It is difficult to define *Theosis*, but not difficult to cite several biblical passages that strongly suggest a process of heightened reflection of godly nature, which stimulated Christian deification discourse. The following grouping of biblical passages is meant to bring out the logical development of the idea:

IMITATION OF GOD

- Be perfect, therefore as your heavenly Father is perfect (Matthew 5:48)
- The one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father (John 14:12)
- Be imitators of God, as beloved children (Ephesians 5:1)

TAKING ON GOD’S NATURE

- You... may become participants of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4)
- You are gods, children of the Most High, all of you (Psalms 82:6)
- It is not written in your law, “I said, you are gods’? (John 10:34)

I shall continue, in the next issue, sharing the various biblical references upon which this idea of *Theosis* was developed. *Theosis* is the foundation of our Eastern Spirituality.



THE EASTERN HERALD

СХІДНЬЙ ВІСНИК

The Weekly Newsletter of Very Reverend Canon Wayne J. Ruchgy, Ph.D.

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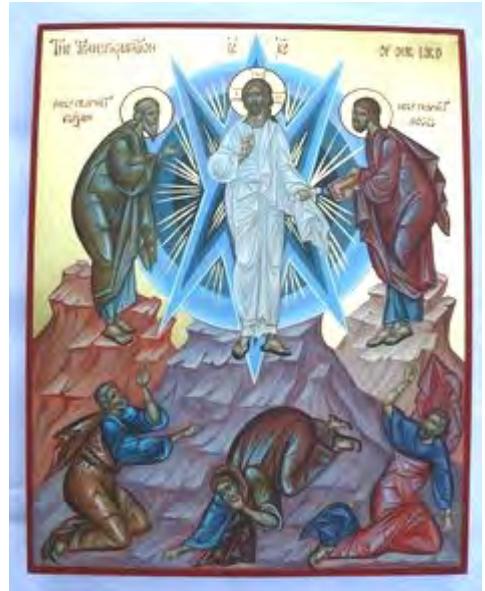
Weekend of the Man Born Blind

May 25-26, 2019

THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE CHRISTIAN EAST

Our Eastern spirituality calls us to develop a truly deep desire to get in contact and to live in union with our God, Who we call Father, Son and Holy Spirit. While different religions offer distinctive understandings about the nature of this union and the way to the attainment of salvation. These differences notwithstanding, it seems reasonable to argue that salvation involves some form of union with God. Thus, the desire for union is the theme of religions and consequently theologies. Let us not be too naïve, however. Not all religions are equally valid ways of salvation.

Any religion that wants to redeem its promises should give an answer to the most profound question of human life, namely, what is the way back to God, to live with God, to live in God and share in the divine? I truly believe that our Eastern Spirituality gives a sincere and honest answer to this complex question. Christian theology from the beginning has offered an answer to the world and its followers in the form of the doctrine of deification and/or union with God. Even though the Eastern wing of the church has been the major carrier of this doctrine through the patristic era to our days, never has it been the sole treasure of one part



THE TRANSFIGURATION

approached the idea of union with the help of different vocabulary. We are reminded by one theologian of the fact that the idea of deification, oneness with God, God-likeness is “that which from the beginning has constituted the innermost longing of man’s existence.” Our Eastern Church, I truly believe, most succinctly addresses this issue.

A Link to Baptism

The cure of the blind man also symbolizes mankind's means for its recovery from its blindness. It symbolizes the Sacrament of Baptism. Baptism is called holy enlightenment. Those who have been recently baptized are called the newly enlightened. This gospel from Saint John was read in the ancient Church on Holy Saturday when Catechumens were baptized. As this man is cured of his blindness when he washes in the waters of the pool of Siloam, as Jesus tells him to do, so are we brought out of darkness into a new life when we are baptized as Christ instructed us to be. Jesus restores His creation, mankind, with the potential to become what it was meant to be before the fall of Adam.

We also hear in the reading that after this man was cured many of those who knew him before did not recognize him. He is still the same man

but something has significantly changed about him. He is no longer blind. So when we are illuminated we are also new persons, though our outward appearance might be the same. To symbolize this newness a white garment is put on us to show the purity with which we start this new existence. We must, however, become different and unrecognizable in our inward and outward actions also. We must manifest our new existence to those around us through these actions. We must radiate this new found light to others by the way we live our lives. We must say to the world, "I am he who was blind but now my eyes are opened." Credit must be given to Him who has cured us of our darkness by living our lives according to the lessons of the illumination we have received and the continued guidance we get with the reception of the Holy Spirit.