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The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Faith and Order

The forth Sunday of Zemene Astemhero

Liturgical Readings:

1st Cor. 2: 1— finish; 1st John: 5:1—6; Acts 5:34 – finish

Ps. 4:2

John 9:1 - finish

The Anaphora of Our Lord

“Lord, I Believe” — A Reflective Article on John 9:1–41

The Gospel account of the man born blind stands as one of the most profound revelations of Christ’s transforming mercy. In John 9:1–41, we witness not only the restoration of a man’s physical sight but the awakening of his soul to the Light of the world. From the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo perspective—rooted in ancient faith, contemplative depth, and sacramental understanding—this passage unfolds as a living icon of God’s redemptive purpose in the life of every believer.

As Jesus and His disciples encounter the man born blind, a question arises from human assumptions: *“Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”* But Christ answers with divine authority and compassion: *“Neither... but that the works of God should be revealed in him.”* This response shifts the entire spiritual landscape. Instead of locating suffering solely in the realm of personal fault, Jesus reveals that sometimes God chooses the unexpected and the overlooked to become vessels of His glory. The Psalmist echoes this sacred truth when he proclaims: **“Know that the Lord has set apart him that is godly for Himself.”** (Ps. 4:2–3). The man born blind becomes precisely such a vessel, prepared not by privilege or learning but by humility and openness.

Christ then declares, *“I am the Light of the world,”* and proceeds to anoint the man’s eyes with clay mixed with His own spittle—a gesture deeply evocative of the creation of Adam from the dust. This is more than a miracle; it is an act of new creation. Yet while the blind man receives sight, the Pharisees—armed with the Law and proud in their knowledge—remain shrouded in spiritual darkness. St Paul’s words come alive here: **“The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God... for they are spiritually discerned.”** (1 Corinthians 2:14). Intellectual mastery without humility becomes blindness; simplicity joined with obedience becomes sight.

As the healed man is interrogated by the Pharisees, his understanding of Christ begins to unfold. At first, he simply identifies Jesus as “a man.” When pressed further, he calls Him “a prophet.” Eventually, after being cast out of the synagogue for standing by the truth, he encounters Christ once more. This time Jesus reveals Himself plainly as the Son of Man, and in a moment of radiant faith the man responds: **“Lord, I believe,”** and he worships Him. This ascent—from recognition to confession to worship—beautifully reflects the spiritual journey of every Christian soul. As St John the Apostle teaches: **“Whosoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God... and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.”** (1 John 5:1,4).

In the courageous stance of the healed man, we hear an echo of the Apostles in the Book of Acts. When the Sanhedrin sought to silence them, Gamaliel wisely declared: **“If this plan be of God, you cannot overthrow it.”** (Acts 5:38). And after being beaten, the Apostles rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for the Name of Christ (Acts 5:41–42). The healed man shares in this apostolic courage. He stands firm despite pressure, ridicule, and rejection. Though excluded by earthly authorities, he is embraced by the Heavenly King.

The narrative reminds us that true sight is both a divine gift and a sacred responsibility. To proclaim *“Lord, I believe”* is to stand in the Light—yet that same Light exposes the shadows we may be tempted to hide. Christ’s words resound with sobering clarity: *“For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may be made blind.”* Spiritual blindness arises not from lack of knowledge but from the refusal to receive grace. The Ethiopian Orthodox tradition teaches that humility, repentance, and obedience open the eyes of the soul, while pride and hardness of heart close them.

Thus, the story of the man born blind is our story. We too are called from darkness into the marvellous Light. We too are touched by the hands of the Creator, washed in the waters of mercy, and invited into the boldness of faith. Like the once-blind man, we are summoned to grow from mere acknowledgement of Christ to wholehearted worship of Him.

May our lives echo his confession—simple yet powerful, humble yet triumphant: **“Lord, I believe.”** And may this belief open our eyes ever more deeply to the love, truth, and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, now and unto the ages of ages. Amen.