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The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Faith and Order

The Fourth Sunday of Zemene Asterio (The Season of Manifestation (Theophany)

Liturgical Readings:

1 Cor. 2: 1—end; 1 John 5: 1 - 6; Acts 5: 34 —end

Ps. 5: 2—3

John 9: 1—end

The Anaphora of Our Lord

“O Lord, I believe” (John 9:38)

Beloved in Christ, the Gospel according to Saint John, chapter nine, sets before us not merely a miracle of restored sight, but a revelation of faith born through suffering, obedience, and divine encounter. The cry of the man once blind — “Lord, I believe” — is not uttered at the moment his eyes are opened, but when his heart is illumined. This confession stands at the heart of the Church’s proclamation, for true sight is not simply to see light, but to recognise the Light of the world.

The man is blind from birth, not by chance nor as punishment, but so that “the works of God might be made manifest.” From the beginning of Scripture, God reveals Himself as the One who brings order from chaos and light from darkness. Just as creation itself awaited illumination, so this man sits in darkness until the Word speaks. In Ethiopian Orthodox theology, blindness often signifies not only physical affliction but the fallen condition of humanity awaiting restoration. As the Psalmist cries, “Give ear to my words, O Lord... in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait expectantly” (Psalm 5:2–3). The blind man waits, though he does not yet know for whom he waits.

The Lord’s action is deeply sacramental: He anoints the eyes with clay and commands washing in the pool of Siloam. This recalls the mystery of creation itself, when God formed humanity from the dust of the earth. It also foreshadows the Church’s understanding of baptism and healing — obedience preceding understanding. The man goes, washes, and returns seeing. Yet the greater miracle has only begun. Sight brings not comfort, but conflict. Those who claim to see — the Pharisees — prove themselves blind, while the one who had no sight now walks steadily toward faith.

Here the apostolic teaching resonates: “My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power” (1 Corinthians 2:1–end). The healed man is no scholar; his theology is simple and fearless: “One thing I know: I was blind, now I see.” This is the power of lived testimony, a truth the Ethiopian Church has long preserved — that faith is confessed not only in words, but in witness. As Saint John later writes, “This is the victory that overcomes the world — our faith” (1 John 5:1–6).

The interrogation intensifies. Religious authority resists divine truth when it threatens established certainty. Yet even among the council, God raises voices of restraint and discernment, as in the days of the Apostles, when Gamaliel warned: “If this plan is of human origin, it will fail; but if it is from God, you will not be able to stop it” (Acts 5:34–end). So too here: the work of Christ cannot be undone by disbelief. The man is cast out, but in being rejected by the synagogue, he is received by the Son of Man.

This moment is the turning point of the Gospel. Jesus seeks the man — a profound image of divine mercy. Faith is not the result of human searching alone; it is God who seeks the faithful. When Christ asks, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” the man responds with humility, “Who is He, sir, that I may believe in Him?” Revelation follows relationship: “You have seen Him, and He is speaking with you.” Then comes the confession that crowns the Gospel: “Lord, I believe.” And he worships Him.

This confession echoes throughout salvation history. When the Temple was destroyed, Christ spoke of a greater reality: “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (John 2:19–22). The true temple is His body, and those who believe become living stones within it. The blind man, once excluded, now stands within this living temple, seeing not only with eyes, but with faith.

From an Ethiopian Orthodox perspective, this Gospel proclaims that faith matures through obedience, endurance, and truth spoken without fear. The man does not fully understand Christ at first, yet he follows His command. He is questioned, mocked, and expelled, yet he does not deny what God has done. His journey mirrors that of the Church herself — often rejected, yet ever seeing; often persecuted, yet never blind.

Beloved, this Gospel confronts us with a question that cannot be avoided: do we see, or do we merely claim to see? Christ declares, “I came into this world for judgement, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.” True sight requires humility. It requires the courage to say, with the healed man and with the Church of every age, “O Lord, I believe.”

May our prayer rise each morning like incense, as the Psalmist teaches, and may our faith rest not on human wisdom, but on the power of God. May we, once blind in heart or mind, be illumined by Christ, the Light from Light, and confess Him not only with our lips, but with our lives. And having seen Him, may we worship Him — to the glory of God the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit. Amen.