

## Homily for 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent

1 Samuel 16:1b,6-7,10-13a; Ephesians 5:8-14 ; John 9:1-41

Dearly Beloved, on this 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent, we read about the story of the man born blind. This man represents all of us in our faith journey, from ignorance and in the state of darkness to insight into the mysteries of Christ. The passage introduces us to man blind from birth. He starts by giving him eyesight, but by the end of the story this man also has insight. On the other hand are his parents who out of fear, and the Pharisees who out of hatred, remained blind.

One lesson that this passage introduces is that faith is a gift from God. Unlike other miracles, Jesus cures this man without being asked, saying instead that the reason for this miracle was “*so that the works of God might be made visible*” ... so we can see that Jesus is the “*Light of the World*,” so we could have **insight** and not just **eyesight**.

Dearly Beloved, unaided by grace, MAN in the state of Original Sin, has lost all spiritual vision. We are unable to see God or endure the light of his glory. This lack of vision causes many to despair and live in hopelessness without any “vision” for their lives. Many are frustrated because they don't know what the true purpose of their existence is. Many cannot see past the **sufferings of this world** to the glory that awaits them. Still others have retreated into the **material world** and cannot see beyond it. Others have retreated even further, away from reality into the realm of their own mind, their own opinions, and so forth. St. Augustine describes this condition of the human person as *curvatus in se* (man, turned in on himself). Yes, there is a blindness that imprisons many in darkness. And even for us who do believe, there are still areas in which it is hard for us to see. Coming to see God more fully, and ourselves as we really are, is a journey we are still on.

We are told, **Jesus spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva, and smeared the clay on his eyes, and said to him, “Go wash in the Pool of Siloam.” So he went and washed, and came back able to see.** Hopefully, you can see baptism here. Baptism is the first stage of enlightenment. (CCC1216).

**Notice he comes back ABLE to see.** But just because you're *able* to see does not mean you actually DO see. Baptism is not the end of our journey, but the beginning of it. It renders us *able* to see. But we are still newborn babes; we need to grow.

When asked who has cured him, his response was “**the man called Jesus.**” To him, Jesus is just a “guy.” And then they ask where Jesus is, and all he can say is that “**I don't know.**” Hence, although he is able to see, he does not yet actually know Jesus.

And this describes some of us. We know *about* Jesus but do not know *him*. Some Catholics in the pews are “sacramentalized but unevangelized.” The church has always thought that as powerful as the sacraments are, they are signs pointing us to Christ. Sadly however that's where some of our journeys ends. It's like holding on to the pole with the McDonald's sign without entering and eating. Some do receive the sacraments, but have never really met Jesus Christ and do not know him in any more than in an intellectual way. Many don't even expect to know him. He is little better to them than “the man called Jesus.” They've heard of Jesus, and even know some basic facts about him, but he still remains a distant figure in their lives. And when asked questions about him, they respond like this man, “I don't know.”

Interestingly, this man's faith and knowledge about Jesus progresses through the drillings, interrogation and ridicule of the people and the Pharisees. Our vision gets clearer as we meet the challenges of life.

As the man is challenged to say something about Jesus, he moves beyond calling him "**the man called Jesus**" and describes Jesus as "**a prophet.**" He has gained some insight here. A prophet speaks for God, and Jesus is the Word made flesh.

After interrogating his parents, the man was called in a second time and put under oath. We notice his determination and fearlessness unlike his parents. He acknowledges to them,

***"If this man were not from God, he would not be able to do anything." They answered and said to him, "You were born totally in sin, and you are trying to teach us?" Then they threw him out."***

He now progresses to see Jesus as "**coming from God**". This then leads us to the conclusion of both this gospel and this man's faith journey. Having endured the hatred of his world and the loss of many things, the Lord approaches him. The text says,

***When Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, he found him*** (Never be afraid of your faith journey. Be convinced of this fact, at your lowest wit, Jesus will find you.) ***and said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" He answered and said, "Who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?" Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, the one speaking with you is he." He said, "I do believe, Lord," and he worshiped him.***

After all this, he finally sees. He sees not only Jesus, but also *who* Jesus is. ***"I do believe, Lord," and he worshiped him.*** Regardless of your situation, your faith will always lead you into worship.

Permit me to ask you? At what stage are you in your faith journey? Have you come to that point of a personal relationship with Jesus or are you still at the point of celebrating the sacraments with no better understanding and deeper meaning? It's my prayer that the good Lord will open the eyes of your minds to believe and know who he truly is, that you may offer a worship acceptable to him.