

4th Sunday of Lent - A
I Samuel 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a;
Ephesians 5:8-14;
John 9:1-41
Little Flower - 3/26/17

My Brothers and Sisters,

In today's Gospel we hear the story of Jesus' encounter with a man born blind. We can look at the story on two levels. On one level, we can look at the miracle as a gift of physical healing. On the other level, we can look at the miracle as the gift of faith.

The miracle as a gift of physical healing suggests two truths. The disciples asked Jesus if the man was blind from birth because of his own sins or the sins of his parents. Jesus' answer rejected the thesis that the man's blindness was the result of anyone's sin. Jesus said that he was born blind "*so that the works of God might be made visible through him.*"

Although we would never pose the question the way the disciples did, we are still affected by this kind of thinking. For example, we often expect good things to happen to good people and bad things to happen to bad people. Therefore, we are offended, and sometimes our faith is even shaken, when bad things happen to good people or good things happen to bad people (although it is not our place to judge). In fact, just as with the man born blind, God often brings good out of bad.

Second, as a physical healing, this is one of two miracles in John's Gospel that reveal the divinity of Jesus. The Gospels suggest that there were other people who were seen as miracle workers in the time of Jesus. However, this miracle sets Jesus apart from them: "*It is unheard of that anyone ever opened the eyes of a man born blind.*"

Of course, Jesus not only gave the man born blind physical sight but also gave him eyes of faith. From the moment Jesus cured him, the man was forced to defend what had happened to him. The more he had to defend him, the more his faith deepened. At the end of his interrogation by the Pharisees, he professed Jesus to be a prophet. After the Pharisees expelled him and Jesus encountered him, he professed faith in Jesus as the Son of Man and Lord and worshiped him. Also, similar to the woman at the well last Sunday, the man became an evangelizer, not by choice as she did but out of necessity. However, unlike the Samaritans, those to whom he spoke rejected Jesus.

What does it mean to see with eyes of faith? Faith gives us the ability to see mystery, i.e., to see the presence, power, and activity of God in our own lives, in the lives of others, and in our world. This reading suggests that paradoxically it is often easier to see with eyes of faith when our faith is challenged.

In today's Gospel, Jesus also said, "*While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.*" However, as St. Paul suggests, while Christ may be the light of the world, he can only shine as brightly as we are willing to be lights in the world. If we live as children of light, our good deeds bring the light of Christ to the world.

My brothers and sisters, the first reading from Samuel suggests a third kind of sight, insight or wisdom. God sent Samuel to Jesse in Bethlehem to anoint one of Jesse's sons as king, the one whom God had chosen. God warned Samuel, "*Do not judge from his appearance or from his lofty stature.... Not as man sees does God see, because man sees the appearance but the Lord looks into the heart.*" This is one of our biggest temptations. We tend to judge people by appearance and status. Like the Lord, we need to try to see into the hearts of others.