

4th Sunday of Lent - 3/2/08

My dear friends in Christ,

Spiritual blindness is common in every generation and there is none so blind as those who do not wish to see.

Often in our conversation, when admitting to mistakes, we use phrases like:

“How blind I was.”

“Now I see.”

“I was completely in the dark.”

My friends, we can get so wrapped up in our own world, our own agenda and plans, our prejudices, that we lose the sensitivity to really see. As a result we only see what we want to see and what suits us and disregard the rest.

For example:

Selfishness blinds us to the needs of others.

Insensitivity blinds us to the hurt we're causing others.

Snobbery blinds us to the equal dignity of others.

Pride blinds us from our own faults.

Hurry blinds us from the beauty of the world around us.

Materialism blinds us from all spiritual values.

Superficiality blinds us to a person's true worth and causes us to judge by appearance.

You know, each Sunday we come to Mass, we all bring our own blindness, our need to hide, our readiness to deceive, fears and hatred too deep to manage, resentments that eat at us, abuse that makes us cry, doubt and leads us to wonder if God actually cares about us. We come with all of this and much more.

This blindness, my friend, whatever it is in your life and in my life, blinds us to the work of God in our lives.

We are all very much in the Gospel today, not only was there the blind man himself but also the Pharisees and religious leaders, the man's neighbors, a crowd of onlookers, along with Jesus himself.

There is the irony of who can really see and who cannot see.

The Pharisees, with 20/20 vision and so blind to the work God had in Jesus. By the time we get to the end of the Gospel, the Pharisees ask the question, "Surely we are not blind, are we?"

Yet in the midst of all this blindness, a man born blind is healed. He sees in Jesus a prophet and man from God and his Lord. Each time he speaks with Jesus, his faith in Jesus deepens. It did not happen straight away. It came in three stages. We all need to keep this in mind.

The first thing is that the gift of faith takes place gradually, not all at once. John describes the miracle as taking place in three stages.

The first stage comes when some people ask the blind man about his cure. The blind man replies, "The man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and told me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' So I went there and washed and was able to see."

And so the blind man's first perception of Jesus is that he is a man, a remarkable man, but just a man.

The second stage in the blind man's gift of spiritual sight comes when the Pharisees question him. They ask,

"What do you say about Jesus since he opened your eyes?"

The man replied, "He is a prophet."

The blind man's answer tells us growth in his understanding of Jesus. He has a spiritual vision of Jesus.

The more he thinks about what happened, the more convinced the blind man becomes that Jesus must be more than just another man. He must be a prophet.

This brings us to the third stage.

Later on that day, the blind man meets Jesus face to face. Remember that Jesus was not around when the blind man washed and could see.

Now Jesus looks into the man's eyes and says, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" The man said, "Who is he so that I may believe in him?"

Jesus said, "You have seen him and the one speaking with you is he."

"I do believe, Lord," the man replied, and falls on his knees before Jesus.

So the man's spiritual vision of Jesus changes.

He saw Jesus as a great man. He saw Him as a prophet. Now he sees him as Lord. We must always keep in mind that for all of us, spiritual awareness takes time. We have to be open and patient.

Today, Jesus won't spit on the ground and rub mud in our eyes so that we can see. But the Word and this Eucharist are for our healing, so that we can say in faith, "One thing I do know is that I was blind and now I see."

We may not know if or even whether we will be healed today. But all of us are in the story. This is our story. We are or we were once in darkness, blind. We hope and pray that we will see the light.

So let us ask the question today in this time of Lent, what blinds us? Is it our pride, sensitivity, selfishness, snobbery, our hurry, materialism, superficiality?

Let us pray that you and I can say, "I once was blind, but now I see, was lost, but now I am found."