

Jewish people in Jesus's day believed that when someone became ill or disabled, that was punishment from God for their sins. But in today's Gospel Jesus tells us, and shows us, that's not true. God is love, not a Meanie, and Jesus wants to make us whole. He is the Light of the world; the revelation of God.

Jesus gives sight to a man who is blind from birth, by spreading some mud on his eyes, and telling him to wash his eyes at the pool of Siloam, which means sent. When he sees for the first time in his life, onlookers send the man to the Pharisees.

There he testifies that Jesus must be from God. And things get hostile fast. He stands up for Christ's goodness as they repeatedly try to dissuade him, and exasperated, they throw him out. What a great example of faith he is for us, when faith comes under fire. When Jesus finds him later, the man again professes his faith in Christ, and Jesus observes that so often those who think they see, the know-it-alls, are really in the dark.

When we use the word blind, it can mean the physical inability to see, or the metaphorical inability to see. We don't say "Are you blind?" to someone who is unable to see. We say it to someone who doesn't understand something, or who's in denial, sore losers. This can be in school, sports, business, politics, or faith.

That's where the Pharisees find themselves today. They could not accept the truth that the cure of the blind man was real, even though the man said so, even though his parents said so. They scramble to come up with excuses so they don't have to believe it, like: miracles don't happen on the Sabbath; maybe this isn't the same guy; maybe he really wasn't blind.

They can't bring themselves to admit that Jesus works miracles, a prophet who needs to be listened to, the *Messiah* who has finally come. It's the blindness of the world that will murder Jesus.

This kind of blindness didn't stop with the Pharisees. Our vision is limited. Consider instant replays on football games. What we're sure we saw, on closer inspection, we didn't see.

Another example of not seeing clearly is a true story I once told at St. Pius X parish. A woman admitted how she was so irritated at Mass one day when she noticed a girl, wearing sunglasses in church – in church!, and designer jeans, fancy boots and a real sparkly t-shirt – like she was a mall princess. It just annoyed this woman for the rest of the Mass. And then at communion time, she sees the girl reach under her kneeler, and she pulls up a white cane, and tap-tap-taps her way down the communion line.

The woman was ashamed of herself. She saw the sunglasses, while God saw the white cane. God sees the heart, while we judge and criticize people around us – like that blind girl who had no idea what she was wearing, or like David in our First Reading. God saw the second king of Israel in David, while everyone else saw the youngest and seemingly least qualified of Jesse's sons. God sees differently than humans do.

If we want to see more clearly, to see more with Christ's eyes, the first step is admitting to ourselves our view of the world isn't flawless, that we see what we've been trained to see. We can be so opinionated, closed-minded, judgmental, hard-hearted, that we don't see the whole picture. We're not standing in someone else's shoes.

Like the Pharisees, our vision is clouded by our biases, and we won't accept answers we don't want to hear. For a complete vision, we have to be humble enough to be open to what others see and share with us. And pray that we can do that, to see with Christ's eyes that see the potential in people, eyes of compassion and forgiveness.

Each of us sees some darkness in our part of the world we inhabit – in our homes, our workplaces, where we shop, where we socialize. Bring the Light of Christ there. Little things matter!

Fourth Sunday of Lent, March 14, 2021

Fr. John Ozella, Pastor

Christ the King