

## FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

*Gospel: John 9:1-41*

As Jesus walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. The neighbours and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" Some were saying, "It is he." Others were saying, "No, but it is someone like him." He kept saying, "I am the man." But they kept asking him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, "Go to Siloam and wash." Then I went and washed and received my sight." They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."

They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, "He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see." Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not observe the sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And they were divided. So they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened." He said, "He is a prophet."

The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" His parents answered, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself." His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask himself."

So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, "Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner." He answered, "I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" He answered them, "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?" Then they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from." The man answered, "Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?" And they drove him out.

Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" He answered, "And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him." Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he." He said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped him. Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind." Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him, "Surely we are not

blind, are we?" Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, "We see," your sin remains.

## **REFLECTION 1: THE BLIND THAT SEE**

The story is told about the time of a major blackout in New York City. It happened at rush hour close to Christmas. The whole of downtown Manhattan was plunged into inky darkness, traffic was grid locked, nothing moved. Just at that time a man who was walking towards a bus stop felt lost, helpless and frightened. Then he bumped into someone. He apologised and then they got talking together. He happened to be someone who lived close by to where this lost soul had had his apartment. The stranger offered to guide him home; 'stay close to me and I promise to guide you' he cautioned. Sure enough the stranger guided the man home, right to his very doorstep. Now, the amazing thing was that the guide who led him to his apartment, through the darkness of that city, was in fact a man who was completely blind from birth. He was such a good guide in the dark, because he had discovered another way of seeing. He had developed inner vision.

John the Evangelist who gives us the account in today's Gospel of the blind man who was cured didn't record it as one other miracle cure of Jesus. There are as we know quite a number of accounts of healing from blindness in the Gospels and I am sure, many more that went unrecorded. Rather, this is the story of a man who was enlightened by Jesus and who came to faith in him - what saved him was the fact that he had no problem in admitting his blindness. This blind man in fact saw more than the religious leaders of his day - he saw the goodness of Jesus and had more faith in him than they had. The Pharisees had perfect physical eyesight, yet Jesus refers to them as being blind. They were spiritually blind; because they refused to acknowledge that fact, and seek the help that he was offering them. There are, Jesus would illustrate, many forms of blindness, besides that of the physical kind - the kind of blindness that can darken and warp the minds and hearts of all of us. Here are some of them:

- Selfishness*** that blinds us to the need of others
- Snobbery*** that blinds us to the dignity and equal rights of our brothers and sisters
- Pride*** that blinds us to our own faults
- Prejudice*** that blinds us to the truth
- Love of money*** that blinds us to spiritual values.