

John 9:1-41

As Jesus passed by 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 he nor his parents sinned; it is so that the works of God might be made visible through him. We have to do the works of the one who sent me while it is day. Night is coming when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” When He had said this, He 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”- which means “Sent”- So he went and washed, and came back able to see.

His neighbors and those who had seen him earlier as a beggar said, “Isn’t this the one who used to sit and beg?” Some said, “It is,” but others said, “No, he just looks like him.” He said, “I am.” So they said to him, “How were your eyes opened?” He replied, “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 they said to him, “Where is he?” He said, “I don’t know.”

They brought the one who was once blind to the Pharisees. Now Jesus had made clay and opened his eyes on a Sabbath So then the Pharisees also asked him how he was able to see. He said to them, “He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and now I can see.” So some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath.” But others said, “How can a sinful man do such signs?” And there was a division among them. So they said to the blind man again, “What do you have to say about him, since he opened your eyes?” He said, “He is a prophet.”

Now the Jews did not believe that he had been blind and gained his sight until they summoned the parents of the one who had gained his sight. They asked them, “I this your son, who you say was born blind? How does he now see?” His parents answered and said, “We know that this is our son and that he was born blind. We do not know how he sees now, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him, he is of age; he can speak for himself.” His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone acknowledged him as the Christ, he would be expelled from the synagogue. For this reason his parents said, “He is of age; question him.”

So a second time they called the man who had been blind and said to him, “Give God the praise! We know that this man is a sinner.” He replied, “If he is a sinner, I do not know. One thing I do know is that I was blind and now I see.” So they said to him, “What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?” He answered them, “I told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too?” They ridiculed him and said, “You are that man’s disciple; we are disciples of Moses! We know that God spoke to Moses, but we do not know where this one is from.” The man answered and said to them, “This is what is so amazing, that you do not know where he is from, yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if one is devout and does His will, He listens to him. It is unheard of that anyone ever opened the eyes of a person born blind. 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 are you trying to teach us?” Then they threw him out.

When Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, he found him 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, and the One speaking with you is He.” He said, “I do believe, Lord.” And he worshiped him. Then Jesus said, “I

came into this world for judgment, so that those who do not see might see, and those who do see might become blind.”

Some of the Pharisees who were with him heard this and said to him, “Surely we are not also blind, are we?” Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you are saying, “We see,” so your sin remains.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection Questions

- 1) The passage begins with the disciples' question, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" The question assumes a direct causal relationship between suffering and sin. Those who suffer must have brought it on by their own sin (a common Jewish theory at the time...Ex. 20:5, Ex. 34:7, Numbers 14:18 and Deut. 5:9). We, as Catholic Christians, do not believe that suffering is in every case a direct result of sin, but we also do not discount the fact that some kinds of suffering can result from sin. Jesus' answer tells us a lot. In this circumstance where there is no direct causal relationship between suffering and sin, Jesus reminds us that God is using this situation to glorify Himself through offering the cure. When in your life has God glorified Himself through your weaknesses and your suffering? How did you come to realize that that is what God was doing? (2 Corinth. 12:9). How have you been able to witness powerfully to God's goodness and His power by remaining faithful in the midst of adverse circumstances?

- 2) Jesus tells the man to go wash in the pool of Siloam (which means "sent"). The man immediately and humbly obeys and comes back able to see. Interesting that the pool's name is "Sent" (literally named after the aqueduct that "sends" water to the pool). If we look at the word "sent" ('apostello' where we get our word "apostle"), we realize that this again tells us something about Jesus' identity—the One who is Sent into the world, sent to heal, save from sin, to cast out demons, to restore sight—all works of the Messiah. He is revealing His identity through His words and His actions (Isaiah 61). Has Christ revealed Himself to you as the One who is Sent into the world by the things that He has done on your behalf? How is Christ sending you as one of His apostles (one who is sent) into the world to share His life and His kingdom with others?

- 3) Earlier in the text Jesus reminds the man that God will be glorified through this situation. Now we see the ways in which God intended to glorify Himself (i.e. by confounding the people, their categories, their religious beliefs and by making this once marginalized man a profound witness). How has God called you to witness to the great things that He has done in your life? Has your witness ever been surrounded by controversy? Why?

- 4) The parents (vs. 18-23) of the man born blind do not offer any testimony (witness). Instead, they avoid the direct question and tell people to ask their son. Why? What are they afraid of? Have you ever found yourself in a dramatic and controversial situation where you had an opportunity to witness to the power and victory of Christ but in order to witness you had to risk entering more deeply in

to the controversy? What did you do? What does Jesus call all His disciples to do in such circumstances?

- 5) There is a profound contrast between the witness of the man born blind and that of his parents. In the face of intense opposition and hatred, the man says, “He (Jesus) is a prophet...God does not listen to sinners...if this man were not from God, he could do nothing.” The man remains bluntly honest throughout the series of interrogations. The man does not have a personal agenda, his only “agenda” (if there was one) is to speak the Truth of what has just occurred. Do we see the connection between this man’s humble gratitude and his determination to give credit to the One who healed him? What graces in your own life are you so humbly grateful for that you would endure various kinds of hardship in order to witness to God’s power when asked?
- 6) This passage reminds us of the power of personal testimony. What has Christ done for you lately? With whom have you shared that? Imagine Jesus asking you to get up in front of your prayer group, bible study or church community and give testimony to all the things that He has done in your life. What would you do? How would you share it?
- 7) There are more than a few ironies in this text, 1) the blind man can *see* what God is doing and can *see* who Jesus is, but those who have “eyes” close them to the Truth that is being revealed, 2) The Jewish authorities ask the man to give glory to God by denouncing Jesus as a sinner, the man instead gives glory to God by telling the Truth of who Jesus is, 3) the Jewish authorities repeatedly use the phrase “we know”, but then repeatedly reveal their ignorance and blindness. Have you ever experienced such ironies on your own spiritual path to spiritual awakening/sight?
- 8) We all suffer from various forms of spiritual, emotional, relational and intellectual blind spots. How has Christ revealed and healed those blind spots in your life? Jesus reveals the blind spot in order to heal the sight (spiritual, emotional or physical) Have you ever been so happy to have your sight (spiritual, emotional, intellectual) restored that God made you incredibly bold and guileless in your witness to His action in your life?