

Sunday: (March 22): **Jesus frees us from spiritual blindness and sin**

Homily starter anecdote : A woman once approached a priest and confided, “I feel guilty. This morning, before coming to Church, I committed the sin of pride. I sat for an hour in front of my mirror admiring my beauty. Will I have to do penance?”

The priest, looking at her, replied: “Not at all, my child. You only have to do penance for a sin, not a mistake.”

“... the Lord looks into the heart.”

Meditation: Do you recognize the light of God's truth and power in your life? God wants to remove every obstacle that might hinder us from recognizing the light of his truth and wisdom for our lives. Saul, the first king of Israel, failed to recognize God's light and power to save him from his enemies. God replaced Saul with David, the youngest of Jesse's eight sons (1 Samuel 16). God saw something in David which Jesse and his other sons did not recognize - a man after God's own heart who delighted in doing what was pleasing to the Lord (1 Samuel 13:14). David was a man of courage and vision who defeated his enemies and united his people. His strength and success came not from himself but from God who anointed him with the power and wisdom of his own Spirit.

What can keep us from the light of God's truth, wisdom, and strength for our lives? Sin blinds us and causes us to stumble and fall - unable to rise on our own or to walk in the freedom of God's love and truth. Sin clouds the mind in moral confusion, and it grows in darkness and resists the light of God's truth. Only God's light can uncover the darkness of sin and free us to walk in the path of holiness and peace with God.

The light of the world

When the disciples saw a man who had been blind from birth, they asked Jesus what kind of sin had caused this blindness. The Jews had understood that many infirmities were the result of human folly and sin. While sin can lead to physical, mental, and spiritual infirmities, not all sickness is the direct result of sin. Sickness can befall us for a variety of reasons. Jesus answered that God had allowed this infirmity for a greater purpose which God wanted to demonstrate as a sign of his presence and power. Jesus then made a claim which only God could rightfully make. Jesus stated unequivocally, *I am the light of the world* (John 9:5).

In so many words Jesus was saying that he is the one true source of power and light which sustains life and overcomes the darkness of sin, confusion, and spiritual blindness. Jesus' mighty works - his miraculous signs - confirmed the truth of his message and claim to divine authority and equality with his Father in heaven. One of his greatest signs was the healing of a man who had been blind from birth.

Healing of man born blind

When Jesus approached the blind man he first awakened hope in him - the hope which God offers those who seek his help. Jesus then did something quite remarkable for the blind man, both to identify with this man's misery and to draw expectant faith in him as well. Jesus touched the man's eyes with his own spittle mixed with dirt and bid him to wash in the Pool of Siloam which was close to the Temple. This pool of fresh flowing water was one of the landmarks of the city of Jerusalem. Its source came from the Gihon spring located in the valley outside the walls of Jerusalem. This pool was likely used as a ceremonial bath of purification for people who were going up to the Temple to worship.

On the yearly feast of Tabernacles, one of the priests brought a golden pitcher of water from this pool and poured it out over the altar in the temple while reciting from the verse, "You will draw water from the wells of salvation" (Isaiah 12:3). What is the significance of the healing of the blind man at the Pool of Siloam? It is certainly more than just a miraculous event. It is a "sign" that points to the source of the miraculous life-giving water which Jesus offers through the gift and work of the Holy Spirit (John 7:38). Do you want the Holy Spirit to pour out on you his renewing power of faith, vision, and healing love?

The Pharisees were upset with Jesus' miracle on two counts. First, he healed the blind man on the Sabbath, which they considered a serious violation of the command to rest on the Sabbath.

Second, how could a "sinner" and a "sabbath-breaker" do such a marvelous work of God! The man who claimed to have been healed by Jesus must not have really been blind to begin with! Contrary to this false charge, the fact of this man's blindness was well known to many people, including the parents who testified under oath that he had indeed been blind since birth. The prejudice of the religious leaders made them blind to God's intention for the Sabbath (to do good rather than evil) and to Jesus' claim to be the One sent from the Father in heaven to bring freedom and light to his people. The Jewish leaders tried to intimidate both this cured man and his parents by threatening to exclude them from membership in the synagogue - the local congregation of the worshiping community of Jews. This man was shunned by the religious authorities because he believed that Jesus healed him and was the Messiah.

Freedom from spiritual blindness

John Chrysostom, commenting on this passage, remarked: "The Jews (the Pharisees) cast him out of the Temple; the Lord of the Temple found him."

If our witness of Jesus and his redeeming work in our lives causes friends or foes to reject us, it nonetheless draws us nearer to the Lord Jesus himself. Paul the Apostles warns us to avoid the darkness of sin that we might walk more clearly in the light of Christ (Ephesians 5:8-12). Do you allow any blind-spots to blur your vision of what God is offering you and asking of you?

The Lord Jesus is ever ready to heal us and to free us from the darkness of sin and deception. There is no sickness, whether physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual that the Lord Jesus does not identify with. Isaiah prophesied that the "Suffering Servant" would be bruised for our iniquities and by his stripes we would be healed (Isaiah 53:5).

The Lord offers us freedom from spiritual blindness due to sin and he restores us to wholeness of body, mind, soul, and heart.

The unchangeable Light, by Augustine of Hippo, 354-430 A.D.

"I entered into my inmost self with You, Lord, as my guide - And this I was able to do because You were my helper. I entered in and saw with the eye of my soul, the unchangeable Light, very different from earthly lights. It was above my mind but not the way oil is above water or heaven above the earth. It was superior because it made me, and I inferior because I was made by it. Those who know the truth know this light, and those who know it know eternity - It is charity that knows it."

"Jesus, in your name the blind see, the lame walk, and the dead are raised to life. Come into our lives and heal the wounds of our broken hearts. Give us eyes of faith to see your glory and hearts of courage to bring you glory in all we say and do."