

Homily. 4th Sunday in Lent. 18/19 March 2023.

The man born blind didn't ask to be healed, but he was; pure grace and gift. In his own words, it is unheard of for anyone born blind to be given their sight. The question for this man and for his family, friends and the Jewish leaders was; Who did this? As we've heard the man gained his sight after Jesus made a paste of clay and sent him to wash in the pool of Siloam, a name which in the language of the time meant 'sent'. This is exactly what happened to the man. He was sent blindly to the pool and then with new sight he continued to be sent to everyone in the story so as to reveal who it really was who did this unheard of good act.

The man started simply with a name; a man called Jesus did this. After his first interrogation by the Pharisees the man came to perceive that Jesus wasn't just anyone, naming him as a Prophet of God. In his second interrogation by the Pharisees his insight gains more clarity and new depth. He declared that Jesus had to have been sent by God, for only God could ever work such a unique healing. In saying this the man was declaring that Jesus had to have been God's delegate and he affirmed that he was now a follower of the One God sent. For this witness he was excommunicated from the Jewish religion and tossed out from his community, something that his parents were too scared to risk happening.

By now all alone, it was Jesus who tracked him down. Asked if he believed in the Son of Man, Jesus revealed himself to be this end time figure of a new age figure. At last in the full light of wisdom and insight the man fell at Jesus feet and worshiped him, an act reserved only for God.

This is the journey of the 'sent' man, from blindness to sight and from the darkness of ignorance into the light of faith, meaning and conviction. As the story told us the Pharisees took the opposite course, away from what insight and light they had, into ignorance and the darkness of their fears.

At the outset, when speaking to his disciples, Jesus said that he is the light of the world and that while he remains in the world the light shines. God's light in him still remains shining in the world because we, like the man born blind, are on the same journey. Now, we are the ones sent out every day to grow clearer in our sight about Jesus and his importance and meaning for us and for all who want to see as God sees.

How, then, does God see? Well, the 1st reading told us with beautiful clarity; Human beings look at appearances, at the externals, but God looks within, at our hearts and souls. The Blindness of the Pharisees arose from and grew deeper because they focused on the external, the traditions and expectations of their beliefs and culture. The blind man however, had new born eyes and a freshness of vision that they refused to admit and welcome. He saw what had happened to him and followed his questions to that one inescapable conclusion; that Jesus, sent by God and acting for God in doing something unheard of since time began, had to be God with us, the Son of Man and the light of the world.

As we hasten towards the coming solemn celebrations Lent is all about refreshing this journey within us, renewing our insight, wisdom and faith in the light of Christ. For as St. Paul said; We we're once darkness, but now we are light in the Lord. Let us live every day then as children of the light.