

Commentary on the Gospel: The Man Born Blind

Gospel for the 4th Sunday of Lent (Cycle A), and commentary.

Gospel (*Jn 9:1.6-9.13-17.34-38*)

As he passed by, Jesus saw a man blind from his birth. He spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle and anointed the man's eyes with the clay, saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent).

So he went and washed and came back seeing. The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a

beggar, said, “Is not this the man who used to sit and beg?” Some said, “It is he”; others said, “No, but he is like him.” He said, “I am the man.”

They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. The Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, “He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see.”

Some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, for he does not keep the sabbath.” But others said, “How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?”

There was a division among them. So they again said to the blind man, “What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes?” He said, “He is a prophet.” They answered him, “You were born in utter sin, and

would you teach us?” And they cast him out.

Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, “Do you believe in the Son of man?” He answered, “And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?” Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and it is he who speaks to you.” He said, “Lord, I believe”; and he worshiped him.

Commentary

“As he passed by,” the holy Gospel says, “Jesus saw a man blind from his birth.” Jesus who is passing by. “How often have I marveled,” Saint Josemaria said, “at this simple way of describing divine mercy. Jesus is headed somewhere, yet he is not too busy to spot human suffering.”^[1] We see here Jesus’ way of being, how He

is never indifferent to the needs of the people he encounters.

Christ's actions to restore sight to this blind man are filled with symbolism. First, he mixes earth with saliva and anoints his eyes with mud. This gesture recalls the passage from the book of Genesis where the story of man's creation is narrated and God breathes life into a figure of dust (*Gen 2:7*). Jesus in curing that man is carrying out a new creation. The man, blind from birth, needs to be reborn, to begin a new life because now he can see.

Jesus tells him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam, and when the man does so he recovers his sight. The pool's water that cleanses his eyes is a symbol of the water of Baptism, which makes us capable of seeing with the light of faith. The Gospel points out, for the readers who are not Hebrews, that Siloam means

“sent.” Jesus is the One sent by God who, when we turn to Him, especially when configured to his death and resurrection in the waters of Baptism, makes us capable of seeing.

“With this miracle, Jesus manifests himself, and He manifests himself to us as the *Light of the World*. The man blind from birth represents each one of us, who was created to know God; but due to sin has become blind; we are in need of a new light; we are all in need of a new light: that of faith, which Jesus has given us.”[2]

The cure carried out by Jesus gives rise to a heated debate because Jesus has done it on the Sabbath, violating, according to the Pharisees, the precept of the Law. Seeing the light lit in the blind man, the doctors of the law, enclosed in their presumption and incapable of opening themselves to the truth,

immerse themselves further in darkness, determined to deny all evidence. They deny that the man was really blind from birth and resist admitting that Jesus has done it. It is the drama of interior blindness which can affect many people, ourselves too, when we hold on to our personal opinions or ways of acting without a sincere opening to the truth, which can be demanding and require a change in the direction of our lives.

In contrast to this, the blind man starts traveling along a road of growth in the faith. At the outset he knows nothing about Jesus. Then, astonished by the recovery of his sight, he will say at first to those who ask him that “he is a prophet” (v. 17). Later, faced with the insistence of those who interrogate him, he replies simply that if Jesus has been heard by God it is because “if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will,

God listens to him” (v. 31). Finally, when Jesus opens his eyes to faith saying that the Son Man is he who is speaking with him (v. 37), the blind man exclaims: ““Lord, I believe”; and he worshiped him.” (v. 38).

The scene from the Gospel that we are reflecting on today invites us to consider our own attitude: is it that of the learned doctors who, in their pride, judge others, or of that of the blind man who, well aware of his needs and limitations, accepts all that Jesus asks of him, in order to open himself to his grace and the light of faith.

[1] Saint Josemaria, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 67.

[2] Pope Francis, *Angelus*, 26 March 2017.

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Francisco Varo

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