

4th Sunday of Lent (A)  
(1Samuel 16:1,6-7,10-13 / John 9:1-41)  
30.03.2014

On the first Sunday of Lent we read the story of the Fall from the Book of Genesis. In that text we heard how when our first parents sinned *their eyes were opened and they recognised that they were naked and this made them feel ashamed.*

Paradoxically, we could say that what happened there was that when their eyes were opened they became blind to their own goodness!

In the creation story we are told that when God looked upon man and woman whom He had created, He rejoiced and delighted in what He had brought into being. We could say that, in a healthy way, God prided in the work of His creation. Looking upon man and women He was led Him to exclaim: *Behold what I have made is very good!*

It is surely also worth noting that in the first exchange of regard between man and woman there was a mutual recognition of goodness. Man rejoiced to see woman: *bone from his bones, flesh of his flesh and they were both naked and they felt no shame.*

With the Fall what happens is that man and woman no longer see themselves properly: their vision becomes distorted, their sight is impaired.

If as we heard in today's first reading: *God does not see as men see, He does not judge by appearances, but rather judges by what He sees in the secret of people's hearts,* the implication of that statement is that the inverse is also true: *Men do not see as God sees.*

A problem arises when we humans fail to recognise this truth. When we think we can see clearly, in fact, we do not have a clear vision of things at all. There are none as blind as those who imagine they can see!

I was struck not so long ago when someone came to see me to speak of an issue that was troubling her. This person came to seek out counsel, asked if I could help her see clearly because although, as she said, she might think she could see clearly, she was sure she had blind spots. She wanted a vis a vis to point out things to her that she might be missing out on. *I need another perspective than my own to help me see clearly* is what she said. I was struck by the humility and honesty of this person.

What this person acknowledged as true for her is equally true for all of us: none of us see things perfectly/completely. *Our eyes may be opened* – like the eyes of Adam and Eve – but not see things as they should be seen or as they really are. To some extent we all suffer from impaired sight; we all have a somewhat distorted vision of reality.

And so it is that we all stand in need of the healing grace that we witness Christ Jesus offering to the blind man in today's gospel passage. We need this healing because of the effect of what we call *original sin*. We could fairly say that original sin has left all of us blind from birth. We are not able to see the world around us properly; we are not able to see ourselves and other people, including those people we love, correctly, with pure sight, a benevolent regard.

Even when we are blessed with good physical sight we can lack spiritual vision: insight!

If in today's gospel passage there is the record of the physical healing of the man born blind early on in the scene, the real miracle occurs later on in the story when this man's spiritual blindness is healed.

The point made for us in today's gospel passage is that the man born blind came to the stage where he learned to see through the eyes of faith.

His spiritual insight led him to recognise that Jesus was truly the Messiah, the Saviour of the world.

We are all called to have this same spiritual insight and we are offered it as a gift from God.

We are called to recognise that God has the power and the desire to set us free from our distorted vision of Him, our self and each other.

Of course, we need humility to ask for and accept this grace from God and also to receive it.

Today's gospel passage goes on to draw to our attention how some people can be so blinded by their pride – pride bolstered by their legalistic attitudes – that they cannot see and rejoice in the wonderful things that are evidently happening before them.

I say *some people* recognising that *some people* can be us!

The Pharisees we meet in today's gospel passage were more concerned about the letter of the Law and the threat Jesus posed to their authority than they were ready to recognise and allow themselves to be amazed by and rejoice in the Lord's action which they witnessed before their very eyes.

Even though the Pharisees we meet in today's gospel passage could see the power of God at work in the love that led Jesus to have compassion on the blind man and heal him, they refused to accept this healing as a sign of God's goodness. Thus they remained blind to the truth.

Let's not *tut tut* too loudly, for the truth is that we can all fall into the same trap.

We too can choose to remain blind to the truth: the truth about God, ourselves and others.

Already yesterday – in the gospel story of the Pharisee and the publican going up to pray together in the temple – we were shown that we can become very caught up in good religious practice and yet not really grasp the core of the gospel of Jesus Christ which is God's merciful love.

I see the blind man in the gospel story read today having a lot to teach us.

This man was able to read the signs of God at work in his life.

In the same way we are called to see God at work in our lives.

Just as the blind man was able to recognise and testify to the Lord's goodness in his regard, so we are called to recognise and rejoice in the Lord's goodness to us. We are called to sing His *amazing grace*.

*Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now I'm found, was blind but now I see.*

We know these lyrics. Do we recognise their relevance for our lives? Do we apply them to ourselves as we should?

God's goodness, His *amazing grace* is best made manifest when we are at our most vulnerable.

It is shown when we feel weak and most afflicted.

It shines through the shadow areas of our lives and illuminates those regions of deep darkness which we can be led to traverse at certain moments of our existence.

When, like the blind man in today's gospel, we experience God's *amazing grace* we are led to move

out of the dark recesses of our hearts, those regions to which we resort to hide our shame. We feel free to leave the darkness behind us and come out into the light.

Yes, we dare to stand in the light of Christ.  
We allow ourselves to be bathed in the light of His face.  
We recognise that Christ's light carries healing in its rays.

As a result of this we set aside that terrible ill of self-rejection which menaces us all ever since the Fall.

We leave behind that unhealthy tendency to let our inner darkness speak to us: a tendency which stems from the hold shame has taken upon us as an effect of original sin.

The challenge of this Sunday is to cease ignoring and stop forgetting our innate goodness and beauty.

It is to trust God's vision of His creation as *good* and ourselves within this creation as He sees us: *very good!*

The challenge of this Sunday is to turn away from our refusal to see ourselves as God sees us: as men and women created in His own beautiful image ... as men and women called to be a reflection of His own wonderful light in what is often a dark and sombre world.

We must have the courage and humility to accept our part of responsibility for the darkness within us and all around us, recognising that this darkness is due in no small part to our failure to welcome God's light in our lives, allowing it to shine upon us and transfigure us.