

GOSPEL
John 9:1,6-9,13-17,34-38

As Jesus went along, he saw a man who had been blind from birth. He spat on the ground, made a paste with the spittle, put this over the eyes of the blind man and said to him, 'Go and wash in the Pool of Siloam' (a name that means 'sent'). So the blind man went off and washed himself, and came away with his sight restored.

His neighbours and people who earlier had seen him begging said, 'Isn't this the man who used to sit and beg?' Some said, 'Yes, it is the same one.' Others said, 'No, he only looks like him.' The man himself said, 'I am the man.'

They brought the man who had been blind to the Pharisees. It had been a sabbath day when Jesus made the paste and opened the man's eyes, so when the Pharisees asked him how he had come to see, he said, 'He put a paste on my eyes, and I washed, and I can see.' Then some of the Pharisees said, 'This man cannot be from God: he does not keep the sabbath.' Others said, 'How could a sinner produce signs like this?' And there was disagreement among them. So they spoke to the blind man again, 'What have you to say about him yourself, now that he has opened your eyes?' 'He is a prophet' replied the man.

'Are you trying to teach us,' they replied 'and you a sinner through and through, since you were born!' And they drove him away.

Jesus heard they had driven him away, and when he found him he said to him, 'Do you believe in the Son of Man?' 'Sir,' the man replied 'tell me who he is so that I may believe in him.' Jesus said, 'You are looking at him; he is speaking to you.' The man said, 'Lord, I believe,' and worshipped him.

A REFLECTION BY POPE FRANCIS
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At the centre of the Gospel this Fourth Sunday of Lent we find Jesus and a man blind from birth. Christ restores his sight and performs this miracle with a type of symbolic ritual: first, He mixes dirt with saliva and spreads it on the blind man's eyes; then, He orders him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. The man

goes, washes, and regains his sight. He was blind from birth. 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. Indeed, that blind man in the Gospel, by regaining his sight, is opened to the mystery of Christ. Jesus asks him: "Do you believe in the Son of man?" "And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?", the healed blind man replied. "You have seen him, and it is he who speaks to you". "Lord, I believe", [the blind man said,] and he prostrated himself before Jesus.

This episode induces us to reflect on our faith, our faith in Christ, the Son of God; and at the same time, it also refers to Baptism, which is the first Sacrament of faith: the Sacrament which makes us "come to the light", by being reborn through the water and through the Holy Spirit; as happens to the man born blind, whose eyes are opened after being cleansed in the water of the pool of Siloam. The man born blind and healed represents us when we do not realize that Jesus is the light; he is "the Light of the World", when we are looking elsewhere, when we prefer to entrust ourselves to little lights, when we are groping in the dark. The fact that the blind man has no name helps us to see our face reflected and our name in his story. We too have been "illuminated" by Christ in Baptism, and thus we are called to behave as children of the light. Acting as children of the light requires a radical change of mind-set, a capacity to judge men and things according to another scale of values, which comes from God. The Sacrament of Baptism, in fact, requires the choice of living as children of the light and walking in the light. If I were to ask you: "Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God? Do you believe that he can change your heart? Do you believe that he can show reality as he sees it, not as we see it? Do you believe that he is light, that he gives us the true light?". How would you answer? Each of you, respond in your heart.

What does it mean to have the true light, to walk in the light? First of all it means abandoning false lights:

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the cold, vain light of prejudice against others, because prejudice distorts reality and ladens us with aversion to those whom we judge without mercy and condemn without appeal. This is our daily bread! When you gossip about others, you do not walk in the light, you walk in shadows. Another false light, because it is seductive and ambiguous, is that of self-interest: if we value men and things on the basis of usefulness to us, of pleasure, of prestige, we are not truthful in our relationships and situations. If we go down this path of seeking self-interest, we are walking in shadows.

May the Blessed Virgin, who was the first to welcome Jesus, the Light of the World, obtain for us this grace of welcoming anew the light of faith this Lent, rediscovering the inestimable gift of Baptism, which all of us have received. And may this new illumination transform us in attitude and action, so that we too, beginning with our poverty, our narrow-mindedness, may be bearers of a ray of the light of Christ.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What stood out to you from the Gospel or Reflection/ Homily?



Head: What does it mean to have the true light, to walk in the light?



Heart: Describe some of the ways in which you have experienced Jesus bringing new sight and light into your life?



Hands: In what ways can we grow in appreciation of Jesus being truth and light for us and those around us?

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with one another:

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. "Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray")
3. Offer prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others' prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps praying the 'Glory Be'.