

4th Sunday of Lent - A

Several years ago, there was a movie showing in theatres about a man who was born blind and after almost twenty years in the dark, he was operated on, by the best doctor in town, to give him sight. The operation was successful and for the first time in his life he saw the beauty of nature and his lovely girl friend. Describing how it felt to see for the first time, he said: "It's the most amazing thing in the world ... I can't wait to get up each day to see what I can see ... Everything is like a constant high."

This story gives us an insight into how the man born blind felt when Jesus gave him physical sight. He too probably thought the gift of sight was the most amazing thing in the world. He too probably couldn't wait to get up each day to see what he could see.

But the blind man's miracle of physical sight was nothing compared to the second miracle Jesus worked for him. That was the miracle of spiritual sight, the gift of faith, which Jesus also gave him.

And it is this second miracle, the gift of faith that St. John stresses in today's Gospel. The blind man's answer reveals a growth in his understanding of Jesus. His spiritual vision of Jesus take a giant leap forward.

The more he thinks about what happened, the more convinced the blind man becomes that Jesus must be more than just another man. He must be a prophet!

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This brings us to the third stage of the gospel.

The first thing John implies is that the gift of faith takes place gradually, not all at once. John describes the miracle as taking place in three stages.

The first stage comes when some people ask the blind man about his cure. The blind man replies, "The man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and told me, 'Go to Siloam and wash'. So I went there and washed and was able to see."

And so the blind man's first perception of Jesus is that he is a man – a remarkable man, but just a man.

The second stage in the blind man's gift of spiritual sight comes when the Pharisees quiz him. They ask, "What do you have to say about (Jesus) since he opened your eyes?"

The man replies, "He is a prophet."

The blind man's perception of Jesus.

Later on in the day the blind man meets Jesus face to face. Recall that Jesus was no longer around when the man returned with his sight after washing in the pool of Siloam.

Now Jesus looks into the man's eyes and says, "Do you believe in the Son of Man". The man answers, "Who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?"

Jesus responds, "You have seen him and the one speaking to you is he." "I do believe, Lord," the man replies, and he falls on his knees before Jesus.

And so the man's spiritual vision of Jesus takes its final leap forward. He perceives Jesus to be more than a man. He perceives Jesus to be more than a prophet. He perceives Jesus to be the Lord, before whom "every knee should bend, of these in heaven and on earth and under the earth."

(Philippians 2:10)

And so the man's spiritual sight, his gift of faith, is far more miraculous than his gift of physical sight.

But before we wax too eloquent the blind man's faith in Jesus, let's recall that we too received the gift of faith in Jesus when we were baptized.

Before we were washed in the waters we experienced the miracle of spiritual sight, or faith in Jesus.

This brings us to a second similarity between us and the man born blind.

It is that our gift of faith in Jesus did not come all at once either. It too came gradually, by stages.

For example, when we were small, the first picture we had of Jesus was that of a man – remarkable man, but still only a man.

As we grew older, our perception of Jesus also grew. And our perception of Jesus continues to grow, even to this day, regardless of how old we are.

One of the exciting things about Jesus is that the older we get, the more we learn about him. And the more learn about him, the more remarkable he becomes.

In other relationships, it's usually the opposite. The more we learn about a person, the more we become aware of his or her shortcomings.

This is not the case with Jesus. The more we learn about Jesus, the more glorious he becomes.

Let us close with these thoughts about our Lord and Savior.

Jesus comes to each one of us as he came to people in biblical times. He comes as a remarkable man. He speaks the same three words to us that he spoke to people in biblical times: "Come, follow me!"

And if we follow him, as did the people in biblical times, Jesus will reveal himself to us step by step. Then some morning, when the sun rises in the sky, we too will fall on our knees before Jesus and say to him, "We believe, Lord! We believe you are the Son of God!"