

## 4th Sunday of Lent, Year A

### GOSPEL

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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.

(John 9:1, 6–9, 13–17, 34–38)

### DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- In Jesus' time, blindness and other illnesses were seen as punishment for sin.
- The Sabbath was a day for God, and no work could be done. The action of 'making a paste' was considered work, so the Pharisees accuse Jesus of breaking the Sabbath laws.
- The Pool of Siloam was famous from ancient times as it was a pool inside the city walls of Jerusalem that was linked by a tunnel, built by King Hezekiah, to the Gihon Spring outside the city. This meant that during times of siege, the city always had a water supply.

### EXPLORING THE WORD

There are two main points of today's gospel: the blind man's journey towards faith and belief, and the contrast between the attitudes of the blind man and his interrogators. Like the Samaritan woman at the well in last week's gospel, the blind man gradually moves from lack of faith to faith. First the blind man refers to the one who effected his cure as 'the man called Jesus', then he proclaims him a prophet and a man from God, and finally he declares, 'Lord, I believe' and worships him. This openness to the revelation of God acting in Jesus is contrasted with the 'blindness' of the Pharisees, who, though physically able to see, do not recognise Jesus. The blind man tellingly declares, 'Now here is an astonishing thing! He has opened my eyes and you don't know where he comes from!' John's use of the term 'the Jews' indicates that this group is from the religious leadership, the very people who are trained in the law and ways of God. They, of all people, should know what is from God!

- Are there still things that block your total belief?
- What are the signs of God's presence in your life?

### MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- In what ways have your eyes been opened? What do you see now that you did not see before?
- What have been moments of enlightenment for you?
- Describe an experience you have had of 'having your eyes opened'—of seeing or coming to understand something that you never realised before. What impact did this new awareness have on you? Share your reflections.
- Bring light and life to others this week. Is there some way you can assist in 'healing' another?
- Use the gospel acclamation this week:

*I am the light of the world,  
whoever follows me will have the light of life.*

## SHARING THE TRADITION

A closer look at the Scripture of the day, to see how it makes more explicit God's word to us through the teachings of Jesus Christ

The first reading, in which Samuel anoints David as the chosen one of God, and the gospel, where Jesus anoints the eyes of the blind man with spittle, indicate the importance of anointing within both the Jewish and Christian traditions. Oil is generally used for this purpose in the Church. Part of the baptism ceremony at the Easter Vigil will be an anointing with oil, and chrism will be used to seal the elect with the Holy Spirit during the confirmation ceremony.

- Explain the significance of these symbols and the symbolic actions that accompany them.
- Make links with the other symbols used in the sacraments of initiation: water, the lighted candle, the white garment, the laying on of hands, the bread and wine of life.
- What will it mean to the elect to undergo this initiation into the Church?

## SYMBOLS AND IMAGES

This text again traces the journey towards faith of the man who was born blind and contrasts his openness to the revelation of Jesus as the light of the world with the 'blindness' of the Pharisees, who do not see or recognise the truth of who Jesus is.

## LIVING THE WORD

Practical ideas for group leaders to employ in connecting Scripture and daily life, with suggestions for music and environment

- What preparations are being made in your community for the celebration of the resurrection? Can the elect play a part in these as preparation for their full entry into the community?
- Use a small dish of mud, the Scriptures and a lighted candle as a focus for prayer. Pray for each other, especially that you will always see the truth of God's life and love. Use the intercessions from the second scrutiny from the rite (*RCIA*, §154). A suitable song could be 'Come to set us free' (GA 277). Conclude with the prayer of blessing in the *RCIA* at §97B.

## NOTES