

Homily- John 9: 1-41 Jesus heals a blind man.

- Isn't it interesting how people can be looking at the very same thing – yet see it differently. Take for example some water in a glass: some see the glass half empty, others see it half full. We can look at a piece of art, a picture or drawing – some will see beauty others may not.
- Why can people look at the very same thing and see it differently?
- Because we look at things with our eyes and then our minds go to work: we label it, attach a meaning to it. Our minds use what we have learned; what we remember from experience and what the world tells us about the thing we are looking at: it all gets attached to what we see.
- We see an example of this in today's Gospel passage. Jesus and his disciples are walking and come upon a blind man. The disciples see the blind man as someone being punished. They ask Jesus what sin did the man or his parents commit. Why do they see the blind man that way? Because that is what they were taught. Their culture and society at that time believed : sick people are being punished, paying for a sin.
- But Jesus saw the man differently. Jesus saw him as a suffering person needing relief. Why did Jesus see it *that* way?
- Because Jesus had a different type of vision. Jesus had an “inner vision” – an ability to look more closely; past what his eyes and mind showed Him. Jesus had the ability to see with His heart.
- In today's Gospel reading we hear an amazing story. Jesus gives sight to this blind man. And if that were all the story was about it would stand as a wonderful lesson about God's great power. But this Gospel passage

is about much more. Sure, it is about a healing but more importantly it is about a gift.

- The healing part is pretty obvious. Jesus cured a physical impediment that stopped the man from seeing. But why did Jesus do it? He did it to lay the foundation for the gift.
- Jesus gave that man a gift, the gift of faith. That insight, the “inner vision” to see what is really important. To see and believe what really matters.
- Jesus gave that man the gift of faith because not all vision comes from our eyes.
- The most important things we can see, things we believe to be true – what’s right and wrong – are seen by our hearts and require the gift of faith.
- Faith to see and know God is present in every person and every thing around us, even when our eyes may not show us.
- Faith lets all Christians see the same. like Jesus sees – with love and compassion through the eyes of our hearts.
- Jesus gave the blind man the gift of faith so that he would come to know who Jesus really is and so he could believe and follow Jesus.
- Jesus gives that same gift to each of us and for the very same purpose!
- And it happens in an amazingly similar way. Jesus uses miracles to plant the seed of faith in us.
- For the blind man it was Jesus’ physical touch using mud and spittle. For us, it is our Baptism. Baptism, where Jesus touched us with anointing oils and water to remove original sin – that sin that blocks our “inner vision”. And Jesus continues to feed our faith in the miracle of Holy Communion. These two sacraments are miracles, make no mistake. God is reaching out to us, as

- He did to the blind man, inviting us to know Him, experience His love and see things as He sees things.
- But notice something important. The blind man's sight did not return immediately when Jesus touched his eyes. He had to accept the gift and place his trust in it. He had to trust in Jesus' power to heal; trust in Jesus' love for him – and he had to show that trust. Jesus told him to go wash in the pool of Siloam. He didn't have to go, no one forced him. He trusted Jesus and acted upon that trust.
 - We too must *accept* that gift of faith offered to us. We too must trust in Jesus' power and His love in our lives. The blind man showed his belief and trust by going to the pool of Siloam. For us it is pushing aside our fears and doubts and worries and trusting God. It's praying more frequently to get to know God (and ourselves) better - trusting He hears us. It is going to Penance and Eucharist to let God change us – trusting he waits there for us.
 - Like any gift we can choose to accept it or not. We can choose to see Jesus; follow His teachings; rely on our "inner vision" – or we could choose not to. It is a choice God gives each of us and it is up to us.
 - We can be like the Pharisees in the Gospel story. They rejected the gift of faith even when the evidence – the cured blind man and Jesus Himself – was right in front of them. They said "No, thanks." They thought they knew better. Their arrogance and ego's left them blind.
 - We can be like the parents of the blind man. They had the chance to take and use that gift of faith – to let it change them. But they chose to play it safe, decided not to get involved. They were afraid of accepting the gift and that fear left them blind.
 - Or we can be like the blind man – accept the gift and let it change us. Notice how the gift of faith grows in the

blind man. We see that growth in the various titles the blind man uses to describe Jesus. When questioned by the Pharisees he starts by meekly calling Jesus “the man called Jesus”. Later he thoughtfully calls Jesus “the prophet” (a holy man from God). Finally he courageously acknowledges Jesus as “Lord and God”.

- The blind man shows us the more we accept and are open to the gift of faith, the more we choose to live by that “inner vision”, the stronger and clearer that vision becomes. We come to know God better and better. We see His presence more and more in our lives.
- But here’s the catch. Once we accept the gift of faith God expects us to do something with it.
- Right from the start Jesus expected the blind man to “do” something. First to be an example, a witness to others of God’s great power and love. The pool of Siloam was a very public place where many people gathered for water. It was no accident Jesus sent him there – to be seen by many. The blind man’s presence there was to deliver a message that each person is important to God, everyone has great value in God’s eyes. People of that time looked down upon the blind beggar, didn’t see him as a person, and didn’t even call him by name. At best they saw him as a disability, someone to be pitied.
- But Jesus rejects that belief telling His disciples (and us) that each person is created by God with unique gifts , created for the purpose of giving God glory and revealing God to the world. Our faith, our “inner vision” lets us see that!
- Like that blind man , God expects us to be a witness, an example of His power and love. He sends *us* into the world: our workplaces, communities, homes and families – to be seen, to get involved, and to share our

faith. Not to be silent and distance ourselves like the blind man's parents.

- God expects us to treat each person, especially those in need, as someone of great value, with unique gifts - and God expects us to tell them so; especially when we find it difficult or challenging to do.
- We need to avoid the trap of seeing those in need – the sick, the poor, the depressed, and the lonely – as burdensome or as *things* to be taken care of. We need to use that inner vision to see them for who they really are: Children of God, important. Most times those in need don't want pity. Sure they may need help, but more importantly they want reassurance. Reassurance they are loved; that God loves them; that their life matters and they have a purpose. God expects us to tell them that: by our words, our actions; our very presence with them.
- And when we find this difficult to do we need to remember this: Each person, especially those in need, have something precious to offer us. An *opportunity*. The opportunity to bring them the gift of faith, on God's behalf. And the chance to help them accept that gift, that inner vision to see how close God really is and how much God loves them. It really doesn't get any better than that in life, does it?
- So as we continue on in Lent, let's look more carefully for those opportunities. And let's keep in mind...
- Eyesight is a wonderful gift. But not all vision comes from the eye. What we see with our hearts is far more valuable and important. Let's pray for God's grace to always rely on our "inner vision".