

Now I see...
John 9:1-41: 1 Corinthians 13:12
April 3, 2011

*As [Jesus] walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, **who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?**" Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. We must work the works of [God, the One] who sent **me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work.** As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." When [Jesus] had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and **spread the mud on the man's eyes, saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam"** (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see." (Jn. 9:1-7) We are not born seeing, at least not clearly. Some babies are indeed born blind. For the first 3 months of life we can only see roughly 8-10 inches in front of us, but the brain is still trying to process what is being taken in **visually. It is believed that we do not see in color** clearly until approximately 5 months of age. Much like we learn to walk, talk, run, use our hands, we must learn to see. It is one of the senses that must develop as we grow. Without the proper environment and proper nutrition, even babies with the physiological ability to see can be rendered blind.*

In today's gospel reading we have a man born blind. His ability to see the world with his eyes did not **develop for reasons unknown; however, Jesus makes** clear to us that this man was not blind because of some sin either he or his parents committed, but it was so that the glory of God could be revealed in him, to his community, and to

us today. (Jn. 9:3) **Listen to how Eugene Peterson paraphrases** these verses in *The Message*: “His disciples asked ‘Rabbi, who sinned: this man or his parents, causing him to be born blind?’³⁻⁵ Jesus said, ‘You’re asking the wrong question. You’re looking for someone to blame. There is no such cause-effect here. Look instead for what God can do. We (notice here and in our Bible reading, Jesus specifically says “We”) We need to be energetically at work for the One who sent me here, working while the sun shines. When night falls, the workday is over. For as long as I am in the **world, there is plenty of light. I am the world’s Light.**’”

Jesus made clear to his disciples, as he makes clear to us today, that he is the “Light of the world.” Yet after he makes this proclamation of who he is, and healing the blind man, Jesus is gone, or so it seems. (Jn. 9:5-7) The blind man is left with a community that no longer recognizes him because he has been changed physically and in faith. **He has been touched by Jesus and he is no longer the same.**

The Pharisees get wind of the blind man who can now see, from the community, and they have him brought before them. The Pharisees were the very learned religious leaders of the Jewish people. It was their job to ensure that the people were living as faithful Jews and maintaining all 613 commandments. Jesus healing this blind man on the Sabbath was a major violation of the fourth commandment in their eyes, “remember the **Sabbath and keep it Holy.**” **Somehow the Pharisees missed** seeing how holy the blind man now having sight truly was. Nevertheless the Pharisees put Jesus on trial with the blind man as their chief witness. All of a sudden, the one whose life had been

changed by Jesus was the one who was brought in to convict Jesus. How often does that happen in our lives? “Every encounter with Jesus puts us on trial. His way of bringing new truth into a situation challenges our way of seeing the world, shakes up our habits of thought and action.” (L. Kenkeremath)

Sadly, we at times think like the people who knew the blind man. We have got the world figured out and God figured out and we know that a person who has been blind all their life is not going to just miraculously see! We doubt that an encounter **with Jesus can change us so drastically. In our limited sight, we doubt** Jesus can change others and at times we doubt Jesus can change us and our situation. Or perhaps we simply choose to ignore that Jesus has touched us, because it does require something of us. It requires we let go of our old blind selves, and living into a life of sight, a life of seeing the world through the eyes of Jesus, the Light of the world and sharing the **Good News of God’s grace with our community**. In the letting go of our self and taking in the Light of the World we are changed.

Jesus, the Light of the World, made a poultice for this man from the earth, from the very source of which we were all created, dust, and mixed it with his saliva! The source of our creation, dust, mixed with the Living Water! Can anyone truly be surprised that this man had his sight gifted to him? After applying the poultice and having the man to wash, **Jesus left him there, seeing for the first time ever! Jesus** touches us in the water of our baptism, through the gift of the Holy Spirit, allowing us to see, but then where does he go? How does our spiritual sight develop? It is to grow

and develop in community with one another, through prayer, through connecting with **God's word, and as we begin to live lives as disciples, in** service to others for God.

Who were the people who helped you to see Jesus present in your life? It is important to remember here that at each baptism, as a community of faith you make a covenant to help raise the child or nurture the adult in the life of Christ. It is your commitment to the one being baptized, to help their sight to develop as a person of faith in Christ.

Jesus is present in our lives through the gift of the Holy Spirit and is revealed to us in community **with one another, if we choose to see him, just as he became** present in the life of the blind man. But we know that sometimes our community fails us and we fail one another. If we look closer at today's gospel message we can see that this man's community had failed him. This man should not have been on the streets begging. Jewish law and custom required caring not only for the widowed and the orphaned, but also the infirmed. Why was he on the streets? Why did his family or their neighbors not provide for him so that he did not have to resort to begging in order to eat and care for himself? Somehow the Pharisees missed that and instead put **Jesus on trial. How do you live your life in service so that others** are cared for and Jesus is revealed to them? Today we will take a special offering for One Great Hour of Sharing. We know that those monies are used to help communities following natural disasters, such as those in Japan, Haiti, and New Zealand, to restore lives and to restore a sense of community. It is in your giving that God's grace and the Light of the World is **revealed to those who have needs that we cannot imagine.**

How is Jesus revealed to the blind man in our text today? It is in the community constantly asking him to tell them how his eyes had been opened, to describe Jesus, to tell them who Jesus was, that the blind man begins to understand **who he has encountered and who changed his life by giving him sight**. At verse 11, the blind man first identifies Jesus as, “The man called Jesus...” Upon further questioning by the Pharisees at verse 17, Jesus becomes to him “a prophet.” **Jesus is becoming more real** to him. At verse 33, after additional questioning, he has come to understand that Jesus is “from God.” It is in community and this man looking at **what has truly happened in his life, his eyes now being** opened, that this man comes to understand that he has encountered the Messiah. It starts to come together! Jesus has touched him and changed him! It is at verse 38, after Jesus has returned to him, that the blind man is able to worship Jesus and say to **him, “Lord, I believe.” Who is Jesus in your life today?** Is he simply a man, is he a prophet, do you believe he is from God, and do you truly claim him as Lord of your life?

“When we encounter God’s grace, we see ourselves differently, and others see us differently.” (L. Kenkeremath) ***We must work the works of [God, the One] who sends us out into the world.*** It is time for us to let go of those things which blind us to the presence of Jesus **in our lives and look to the Light of the World to guide us.** “Faith is a lense through which we view life. If we choose to see life through the eyes of Jesus, it often offers surprising and a radical new perspective on the world, a world filled with God’s grace.”(Dr. D. L. Flanagan) *Amazing Grace* reminds us, “I once was lost,

but now I'm found." "...*though I was blind, now I see.*" (Jn. 9:25)