

## Mark 8: 22-26

22 They came to Bethsaida. Some people brought a blind man to him and begged him to touch him. <sup>23</sup>He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village; and when he had put saliva on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, 'Can you see anything?' <sup>24</sup>And the man looked up and said, 'I can see people, but they look like trees, walking.' <sup>25</sup>Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he looked intently and his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. <sup>26</sup>Then he sent him away to his home, saying, 'Do not even go into the village.'

**Commentary:** Jesus again performs an amazing miracle. A blind man is given his sight. He is able to see. Jesus' healing method is one well attested in Jewish and Hellenistic healing stories of that era in terms of his use of saliva and laying on of hands. But this 'explanation' must not detract from the awesomeness of this act, an act not simply of superhuman power, but of compassionate empathy. On an even deeper level, however, it is not mere coincidence that this healing account follows right after another disappointing set of episodes - the disciples' persistent hardness of heart and the Pharisees' disbelief. The irony is in the fact that the blind are being made to see while those who apparently have sight are persistently blind.

Are you able to see or are you blind? Before you answer this question too quickly within yourself take a moment to reflect. Do you really see deeply into yourself or are there parts of you to which you are blind: motivations, agendas, attachments, ways of thinking all of which obstruct God's presence and working in your life?

In this 'era' of Covid-19 and beyond, Jesus' use of saliva to touch a man's eyes would be a huge no-no. Even as parts of the country are making plans to begin easing restrictions, one of the measures that will remain in place will be physical distancing. One of the spiritual challenges in all this will be how our external behaviour may become so 'pharisaic' (strict in a way that tramples love), that we will also miss deeper motivations, intentions and self-examination in how we treat others, reflecting in a mirror what is in our own heart – a lot of fear and judgement.

**Prayer:** Even as we want to be safe, O God, help us to be free in our hearts. Even as we want others to be safe, O God, help us to be gracious and open rather than closed and judgmental. Help us see into ourselves and help us see the humanity in others, vulnerable just like we are and in need of your touch, even as we need to keep our physical distance. May you inspire us, O God, to find creative ways to love and safe ways to express it; Amen.