

The Fourth Sunday of Lent: The Fight for Sight

The long story of the Man Born Blind is less about the miracle of the Lord restoring the man's eyesight, and more about the man coming to faith despite tremendous opposition.

Consider this, the story is 41 verses long, but the actual healing of the man takes only two verses at the very beginning of the reading, verses 6 and 7:

When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva, and smeared the clay on his eyes, and said to him, Go wash in the Pool of Siloam (which means Sent). So he went and washed, and came back able to see.

That was all there was to it, miracle-wise, anyway. But look at what follows: the man grows in faith despite the opposition, first from his neighbors who refused to believe that this was the man they had known, then from the Pharisees who argued that Jesus was sinful, then from his parents who were afraid of the Pharisees and the impact their son's sight and faith could have upon them, then again from the Pharisees who declared that Jesus was not from God. The man responded by refuting their arguments, holding on to his faith in Jesus; more than that, growing in his faith in Jesus, and finally, before Jesus saying, "I do believe, Lord," and worshiped him.

The Pharisees went in the opposite direction, becoming more and more determined to discredit Jesus. By the end of the reading, they were the blind ones and the Man Born Blind was the one who could see.

What I want to concentrate on today is this: what the Man Born Blind experienced as he grew in faith, the opposition he received, is the same as what we experience as we grow in faith. We will always be confronted with those who do not have faith and who want to convince us to give up our faith. Perhaps, you have already received some of this opposition. At school, at work, in the neighborhood someone may say to you, "You're Catholic? OH! You don't really believe all that stuff, do you?" Or they may come out with the old anti-Catholic bigotry such as, "You guys never read the bible," or "You guys worship Mary making her a goddess," or make statements about the Eucharist that are so blasphemous that I it pains me

to repeat them. Or maybe you may come upon people who are not just anti-Catholic, but anti-Christian, or anti-God. They may challenge those areas of our faith that cannot be explained, but can only be believed, such as the Trinity, or Jesus as both God and man.

You probably came upon professors in college, and possibly in high school who challenged your faith, speaking to you as though you were a second grader. "Oh, isn't that nice that you still believe those stories." Then there are those who belittle us because they oppose our ways of living the Christian life, our morality, those actions we are convinced are right or wrong.

Why? Why do people have such opposition to our faith? Probably for a lot of reasons. One of them might be envy; they wish they could be part of a strong Church group, but instead of coming and joining one, they try to destroy those who do come. Another reason might be intellectual arrogance. There are the people who are so sure of their superior intelligence, that they see all who take a step outside of reason and into faith as being idiotic.

There is something else too, that is definitely a part of the opposition we experience to Catholicism, to Christianity, and to being faith filled people. That something else is the devil. The devil is real. He will do everything he can to get you and me away from Jesus Christ. The devil is working in all those who are trying to destroy our relationship with God. The devil cannot stand the fact that we go on retreats and grow closer to Christ. He can't stand the fact that we are determined to be the sons and daughters of God we were created to be. He uses every evil tool he can muster up. He knows how important friends are to us, so he uses friends against us. He knows how we want to develop and use our intelligence, so he makes us think that we are intellectual wastes. He knows how much we enjoy the advancements in technology, particularly our smart phones, so he has turned them into gateways to the world of pornography. He knows how easily we can fall in morality, drugs, sex, whatever, so he uses this against us with the most effective of all his lies: "Everybody is doing this. You don't really believe that there are things you should not do, places you should not go. Let go. Do these things and you'll have a wonderful experience, one which God is trying to keep from you." This is the same argument that the wise scribes of *Genesis* put into the serpent's mouth as he tempted Adam and Eve.

Have you ever noticed that when we slip in morality, or, perhaps, sadly, take a major tumble, we begin to question our faith? That is evidence of the work of the devil. He will do everything, use every trick he has, to return us to a state of blindness. The devil is, after all, the prince of darkness.

But we are not blind. We can see. We know how happy we are when we are with Jesus. Think about those first times that you held your babies, and how you felt more love welling up in you than ever thought possible. Think about how you talked to God about the wonder of life you held in your arms. We know where happiness can be found. We are growing in our faith because we want to perfect our vision until we see God face to face in heaven. Do you know what they call this meeting with God in heaven? They call this the Beatific Vision. The prince of darkness will do anything to keep us from the Beatific Vision. The prince of darkness wants us to be blind.

So men, ladies, do not let anyone or anything steal the light from your eyes. Do not allow anti Catholic or anti Christian or anti-Theist, or immoral people destroy your vision of the Lord. You and I need to put up a fight, a fight for the light that brings happiness. We need to put up a fight with every fiber of our energy against the prince of darkness. We need to fight for Jesus Christ.

At the beginning of today's Gospel Jesus exclaimed, "I am the Light of the World." We pray today that we might allow the Light of Christ to grow within us and glow from us. For it is only our union with Christ that will dispel the darkness of the world.