

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent Cycle A  
The Hidden Light

A man was driving down the road and his car broke down near a monastery. He goes to the monastery, knocks on the door and a monk answered. The man says, my car broke down, do you think that I could spend the night?

The monk graciously accepted the man, fed him dinner, and even fixed his car. Later that night, the man got up to get a warm glass of milk to help him fall asleep, but he saw a strange light seeping from behind a door near the kitchen, a light like he had ever see before. The next morning the man asked the monk, what was that strange light coming from the door near the kitchen last night? The monk quickly answered, I can't tell you because you're not a monk. The man was disappointed at the monk's answer but he thanked the monk and drove off on his merry way.

Some years later the same man, was driving down the same road as years before, and sure enough his car breaks down in exactly the same spot, right in front of the monastery. Like years before the monk takes the man in, feeds him and fixes his car.

Again the man spends the night and he sees the same strange mesmerizing light that he had seen years earlier. The next morning, the man asks what the light was. But he gets the same answer, we can't tell you because you're not a monk. The man says, all right, all right. But I am dying to know what that light is. If the only way I can find out what that light was, is to become a monk, how do I become a monk? The monk replies, you must travel the earth and tell us how many blades of grass there are and the exact number of sand pebbles. When you find these numbers, then you will become a monk.

The man sets about his task. Some 25 years later, he returns and knocks on the door of the monastery. He says, I have traveled the earth and devoted my life to the task demanded and have found what you have asked for. There are 371 trillion blades of grass and 231 trillion sand pebbles on the earth. The monk replies, congratulations you are correct and now you are a monk. I shall now show you the way to the light.

The monk leads the man to a wooden door where the superior monk is standing and says, the light is behind this door. The man reaches for the door knob, but the door is locked. He asks, may I have the key? He is given a key, unlocks and opens the door.

Behind the wooden door is an other door made of stone. The man requests the key to the stone door. The monk gives him the key; he unlocks the door and opens it only to find another door made of ruby.

He demands another key form the monk who provided it. Behind that door is another door made of sapphire. And so it went on until the man had gone through the doors of emerald, silver, topaz and amethyst.

Finally, the monk says, this is the key to the last door. The man was relieved to no end. He unlocked the door, turned the knob and behind that door he is astonished to find the source of that strange light. It is truly an amazing and unbelievable sight. But I can't tell you what it is because you're not a monk.

Well it seems like we're now in the shoes of the man who is now the monk. We're searching for that light that we can't see. Sort of like we're blind just like the blind man in today's gospel reading.

The parable in the Gospel reading has two levels of meaning. The first and the most obvious is that the parable is a story of a miracle. But the second goes much deeper, it's a story of faith and the light that Jesus brings to the world. The light isn't like an ordinary porch light or the light of the sun but it's the light of understanding.

Our sense of sight is cherished and when someone loses their sight or is born without it we think of it as such a tragedy. It's because our sight makes it possible for us to see the beauty of God's creation. Although we might seem to have perfect sight, we can actually be blind, that is blind to the truth.

The man in the parable, who was blind from birth, became a spokesman for Jesus, proclaiming that Jesus had to be from God. If not, how could he have performed such a miracle? Now the blind man doesn't have a name because he plays a symbolic role. He represents all people who come to know God through Jesus.

The parable begins with the disciples trying to understand who's to blame for the man's blindness. In Jesus' time it was commonly understood that a person's serious ailments were attributed to the sins of their ancestors. Sickness and disability were equated with God's displeasure and seen as a punishment. In the parable Jesus turns this misconception around by identifying the man's blindness as a sign of God's glory not God's displeasure. The miracle is the proclamation of God's glory and shows that Jesus is the light of the world to scatter the darkness of disbelief.

The place where Jesus performs this miracle is the pool of Siloam, which means sent. Jesus' cure for the man's blindness is saliva and clay. You just got to wonder, what's up with a saliva and clay cure. Well, saliva in ancient times was believed to have medicinal qualities. The clay suggests the Genesis account of creation. Jesus smears the wet clay on the man's eyes and it's kind of interesting that the original text of the Bible uses the Greek word for the smearing - literally anointed. So the man is anointed and washed in the pool of Siloam which means sent. Sort of remind you of something? Well the water, anointing, and sending sure sounds a lot like a reminder of Baptism to me. What Jesus by his actions was to make that blind man a new creation in Jesus', transforming the man from darkness into light.

The Pharisees are disturbed at Jesus because he performed the healing on the Sabbath. By virtue of Jesus performing the healing on the Sabbath, the Pharisees thought that this violation of the Sabbath law surely meant that Jesus didn't come from God. They just couldn't accept that the miracle even happened, even to the point of going to the blind man's parents to find out if he was really blind.

So in this parable we have a couple types of blindness depicted. Some remain blind even at the end of the parable, choosing not to see. The Pharisees refuse to believe in the cure and the bystanders refuse to believe the man was blind in the first place. The parents of the blind man were blinded by fear. They are afraid to acknowledge what Jesus did, afraid to get involved because the Pharisees could cause them real trouble.

What Jesus was concerned with wasn't the blind man's physical blindness but his spiritual blindness. The blind man had no previous knowledge of Jesus or his true identity, but meeting Jesus changed his life. His belief in Jesus and his acceptance of Jesus as Lord means that he'll never be the same again. Jesus not only heals the blind man but also gives him understanding. The blind man is healed when he believes in Jesus the Light of the World.

We all have faults which distort our vision and cloud our minds. We shouldn't be discouraged by this, because in this world we live by faith. This means that we don't have to have it all before us to believe. In Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist, God has given us gifts to help us search for the unseen light.

Ask the Lord to open our eyes to those things that get in the way of our spiritual growth. Recognize that spiritual growth is gradual and if we engage our faith seriously and sincerely, the Lord will remove the lack of vision from us and one day we shall see him face to face.

Lent is the time for penance and renewal. Nurture your faith by study, prayer and action. Maybe even we can pray for ourselves and for each other that we'll see the hidden light just behind that kitchen door just like the man who aspired to be a monk.