

Father Dan Beeman  
Holy Trinity  
4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent, Year A

A few weeks ago now, I was walking out of Bishop Sullivan Catholic High School after saying Mass, hearing a few confessions, and planning some events for the coming year. As I was leaving, I found two teenagers in the hallway, both seniors. They had finished their lunch break and were waiting for their next class. I overheard their conversation was about prom and all I said when I walked by was, “make good choices, kids.” They laughed, even though they knew I was serious, and then one of the two said, “actually, can I talk to you.” I said sure and we talked for a while about some pretty serious stuff going on in his life. In the midst of it, I asked if he had talked to his parents or friends or anyone else about it and he replied, “No. I’ve been Catholic all my life, and I think I just know I can always talk to priests because a priest cares about what I’ve done as much as where I am going.” I reminded him that in the Confessional we do, but otherwise, I was very happy to hear his experience of priests in his life. His point was a good one, and it makes sense if a priest is doing what he is supposed to be doing. Because, other than in the Sacrament of Confession, a priest points people toward heaven, not looking back at the past. And the reason for that is because that is exactly what Jesus does when he encounters anyone who is seeking to follow Him. He cares far more about where they are going than where they have been.

This week we continue, finding ourselves in the 9<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Saint John’s Gospel, with the story of the man born blind. And the message of this man, and then the dialog of Jesus with the Pharisees brings home the same point that my young friend made about talking with a priest. Jesus Christ will show us in this passage that His greatest desire is to bring us into the light – out of darkness and into His light.

**1\* As he passed by he saw a man blind from birth.**

Verse 1 connects with 2 and 3 which are omitted from today’s reading, but we’ll look at them anyway. His disciples ask him why the man is blind – is it because he sinned, or because his parents sinned? Jewish tradition held that any man who had a physical illness or a misfortune in general, must be receiving punishment either for his own sins (even his future sins) or his parents’ sins. But Jesus makes it clear that basic point. The sin has nothing to do with this

encounter. Rather, this is a moment where Jesus is going to encounter that man and the entire exchange is about the fact that God wants to work in and through him. This kind of an encounter would be unheard of for any kind of healer – but this healer is different!

**6When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva, and smeared the clay on his eyes,<sup>f</sup>7and said to him, “Go wash\* in the Pool of Siloam” (which means Sent). So he went and washed, and came back able to see.<sup>g</sup>**

Here Jesus’ healing power is done in two stages. Jesus’ action on the blind man starts with Him using spit in order to heal. This connects the natural side of his humanity with the saving power of His divinity. He uses that resource which is miraculous the same way he did to heal a man who was deaf and dumb and another blind man. It is a consistent way of Jesus connecting personally with the work of healing. This is important because the world had many healers, sorcerers and scam artists come and go who healed with strange remedies, but none had done so with things so simple as saliva and mud.

But the second part of the healing is important too. Jesus tells the man to go to the pool of Siloam and wash. Saint John even explains the word Siloam means “sent” giving a connection that obedience is an act of faith to do as Jesus commands. This mimics the miracle of Naaman, the Syrian general who was cured in 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings, but more importantly, it allows the man to either follow the command of Jesus or just walk away. This man is faithful, though, because he desperately wants to be let out of the darkness and into the light.

He goes. And he is healed. What an incredible example of living, active faith. He goes, because Jesus commands, and who would have thought that something so simple as this water would be able to heal his eyes, yet he goes. We have to ask then, when God calls to us, when we pray to Him and He asks of us, either in prayer, or in the teaching of the Church, are we faithful? Do we behave like the blind man, realizing that if we respond, we are brought into the light, but if we ignore, we could stay in darkness forever? This man goes, and Saint Josemaria Escriva comments on this section, “This man believed; he acted upon the command of God, and he returned with eyes full of light!”

**8His neighbors and those who had seen him earlier as a beggar said, “Isn’t this the one who used to sit and beg?”<sup>9</sup>Some said, “It is,” but others said, “No, he just looks like him.” He said, “I am.”**

After the account, Saint John lets us see that, though the man was faithful, the people were not focused on where the man was going, but still on where he had been. They are still hung up on the fact that he used to be a beggar, he used to be an outcast, he used to be something less. The neighbors were stuck on where he had been, not where he was going.

**13They brought the one who was once blind to the Pharisees.14Now Jesus had made clay\* and opened his eyes on a sabbath.<sup>h</sup>15So then the Pharisees also asked him how he was able to see. He said to them, “He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and now I can see.”16So some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, because he does not keep the sabbath.” [But] others said, “How can a sinful man do such signs?” And there was a division among them.<sup>i</sup>17So they said to the blind man again, “What do you have to say about him, since he opened your eyes?” He said, “He is a prophet.”<sup>i</sup> 34They answered and said to him, “You were born totally in sin, and are you trying to teach us?” Then they threw him out.**

So first it was his friends and neighbors who didn’t get it. And now the Pharisees decide to go after the guy as a way to trap Jesus. If they can prove that Jesus is working on the Sabbath, their religious laws will allow them to persecute him, to put a stop to Him, but most importantly, to be better than Him. Now here the Church cuts out a good section of the Gospel, but the most essential parts are in verse 13-17 and then at the conclusion of the conversation in 33-34.

Here’s the crazy part. The Pharisees, too, they stick it to the man who has been healed, reminding him in verse 34 that he has no value to them – in their mind, his past life of sin (which was not at all Jesus’ concern even if it was true) was all they could care about with him. They were more concerned with where he had been than what had happened, where he was going. He professes Jesus a prophet and stands before the Pharisees completely healed, and they ignore that! Think about it. The work of God is right before them. They knew the man before when he was blind, and now he can see, and they ignore it like it is just no big deal. But the reality is that the hand of God is at work in our lives, often. Or in those we love. In the gift of forgiveness, in moments of peace, in the miraculous power of the Sacraments, we know God is there, but we go right back to focusing on our

own mindset, our other struggles, our worldly desires. This exchange in verses 13-34 is an invitation not to ignore the ways that God cares for us – whether miraculous or minor – and how He lives us so powerfully.

**35**When Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, he found him and said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”**36**He answered and said, “Who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?”**37**Jesus said to him, “You have seen him and the one speaking with you is he.”**38**He said, “I do believe, Lord,” and he worshiped him.**39**\*

The conclusion of the story is perhaps the most powerful. In verse 34, the Pharisees throw the man out – they cast him out of the temple, which is a physical sign that he is dead to them and their faith. He has no home, yet before he can even be lost, Jesus again receives him and allows Him to make a profession of faith. This is powerful, because this is the moment where he could either turn back to where he was, taking his newfound physical eyesight as a parting gift, or he could go all-in and believe with full faith. Like the woman at the well last week who first had a partial faith and then came to profess belief completely, so does the man who once was blind but now can see. Saint John here, particularly in verse 38 is showing us that recovering his eyesight and truly seeing are not necessarily the same thing. This man realized that Jesus cared not where he was or where he had been, but where he was going.

**Then Jesus said, “I came into this world for judgment, so that those who do not see might see, and those who do see might become blind.”<sup>e</sup>**  
**40**Some of the Pharisees who were with him heard this and said to him, “Surely we are not also blind, are we?”**41**Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you are saying, ‘We see,’ so your sin remains.<sup>‡</sup>

The Concluding passage is Jesus confronting the Pharisees and, once again, seeking to get them to see with the eyes of real faith rather than a world where they are the center.

This is the message of the season of Lent, that we concentrate on the fact that we worship a God who cares more about where we are going than where we have been. He is the first to confront sin, to require us to confess them, to acknowledge our failures. But His atonement on the Cross that is coming is what saves us, and His light is what will lead us to Him. We have to embrace this season of Lent, that is

going to get darker before it gets lighter, but we have to do so knowing that it is because of the love of an incredible God. Way back in verse 6, we see that He took the ordinary things like spit and clay in order to heal. And still today, He takes the ordinary form of bread and wine in order to miraculously bring us Himself. He desires that we receive Him because it means that we know where we are going. It means that among the chaos and busyness of our lives, amidst the fights or the arguments, in the depths of sadness or mourning, in the struggles or in the failures, our God is here. And He desires to come into our lives and give us miracles that show us His light, that draw us to His love, and that promise us eternal life!

## **Prayer of the Faithful**

1. For the Church, especially in places where she is persecuted, that she bring the light of Christ to all people, we pray.
2. For our 40 Days for Life Campaign. That women know that they deserve better than abortion and that we always respect and defend all human life, we pray.
3. For the defense of our nation and the protection of our military, we pray.
4. For those who are ill and who ask for God's healing, especially:

that they know healing and strength, we pray.

5. For those who have died, especially:

Marie O'Keefe

and for:	5:00pm	the intentions of Patricia Modlin
	9:00am	the repose of the soul of Virginia Gerloff
	11:00am	the repose of the soul of Craig de Gasperis

which is the intention of this Mass, we pray.