

4th Sunday of Lent year A

John 9:1-41

Today's (long!) gospel is another beautiful encounter, a *personal* encounter.

Jesus encounters a man blind from birth.

Jesus always comes to encounter *personally*.

Jesus is never content with "general" appearances to the crowd.

Why? Because love is never *general* or *approximate*. Love is always personal.

Jesus comes to love.

This is where Jesus differs from the "stars", who generally prefer appearances to the crowd so as to safeguard their supposed mystique...

Jesus comes to communicate, to share something real: Himself, the mystery of God!

Jesus comes to *encounter*.

This encounter poses many questions, not least of which is the very question posed by disciples.

"WHY? Why the blindness?"

The disciples want to be able to discern direct cause & effect.

They do so based in fairly common thinking:

"Someone sins, the same someone pays – or someone close by pays."

The thinking is still common today.

How many times have I heard,

- "I do not know what I have done wrong to deserve this."
- "All hell has broken loose. I must have deviated."

What does Jesus respond to such thinking?

WRONG thinking!

There is no direct cause and effect.

Bad things do *not* happen for a reason in that sense.

Bad things are not necessarily the effect or the consequence of previous bad behaviour.

Nor are bad things orchestrated by God – because He is bored or peeved. *WRONG!*

We do, of course, believe that a disharmony, a brokenness entered the world way back when the original covenant with God (i.e. Adam & Eve) was broken.

But that is *ultimate* not *direct* cause.

Consequently, "bad things" are mysterious (and painful, for that matter), occurrences that

- God allows
- are not necessarily linked to personal doing
- God wishes to indwell

Jesus responds, by His actions, that the most important thing to know is that God makes use of bad things for a greater good.

Now, "greater good" does not necessarily mean "fix them".

You may have noticed by now...

God does not always fix everything (in fact, He does not seem to fix much!).

Yet, we believe that God *always* responds to our prayer.

"It is so that the works of God might be made visible through them."

Through our brokenness, God works wonders, God *reveals Himself*.

This encounter with the blind man shows us these wonders,
And it shows us where Jesus, as Light of the world, leads us.
There is a *progression* in the encounter with the blind man.
His healing is just the beginning of a journey,
and a fitting metaphor for what *later* occurs.

Notice how Jesus was no one for this fellow at first.
Jesus takes the initiative entirely.
Jesus asks nothing: no negotiation, no test of readiness.
Jesus approaches him, and smears his eyes with clay
and sends him to the pool of Siloam (which, by the way, means “sent”...)
At the pool (suggestive of Baptism), the blind man sees!
His healing is source of controversy: Jesus has supposedly broken the Sabbath rules!
The neighbors are cynical, and the Pharisees are accusatory.
The latter, the Pharisees, accuse the formerly blind man, and Jesus, of being sinners.
Instead of rejoicing with this man in his healing, they interrogate and harass him.
Then, when Jesus learns the fellow has been expelled from the synagogue for his healing,
Jesus finds him, and bestows the gift of faith which grants spiritual sight.
This man gains the type of “seeing” Jesus really means and intends.
It is to such sight that Jesus wishes to lead us.
The formerly blind man comes to “see” who Jesus is.

Jesus proceeds in much the same fashion with each of us.
He sees our blindness.
Without negotiating or waiting until we *feel* ready (which might never happen),
He touches us, He smears soothing clay on our eyes.
Jesus touches us in different ways, and whatever he does,
it is so to lead us to an interior discovery of Who He is.
He takes us along the same path, the same progression as the blind man,
that is to say, from:

- a vague sense that He is from God *to*
- a sense that He honors God in a special way *to*
- deep certitude that He *is* God

Jesus can declare “mission accomplished”.

It is a mission that Jesus continues and is in a hurry to accomplish.

Jesus comes to share God who is light.

This sharing implies the gift of faith which enables us to receive God who is light.

The sight, the seeing of which Jesus speaks is that of faith

– which, strictly speaking, is not *seeing*, but *knowing* deep inside.

You will notice that the formerly blind man declares, “I do *believe*.”

Jesus wants to lead each one of us to

- this illumination
- this deep inner conviction
- this encounter with him, Light of our world

It is an *experience*, not simply *knowledge about something*.

We all have the gift of faith, but

- we may not exercise it much
- we may have erroneous ideas about it

Faith is a gift that enables our mind to touch the mystery of God.

Again, we do not see a thing. But, without seeing, we *know*.

“Wait a minute; how can you know without seeing?!?”

Well, the faith itself grants us a conviction

– which, from the outside, may seem like ridiculous subjectivity.

Faith is a different type of knowledge.

Faith is incredible, yet uncomfortable, for we all want to see with our own two eyes.

Do not be surprised, then, that there be times of wondering, of doubt.

You have not lost your faith.

You are simply experiencing the challenge intrinsic to faith: that of not seeing.

Continue the journey, and become “light in the Lord.”

Jesus is present, the presence by virtue of which

- those who think they “see” i.e. know it all, are shown to be in fact blind
- those who humbly seek, are granted to know, and become light

Let us exercise our faith, by wanting to believe.

Wanting to believe is already believing...

“Wait a minute: it cannot be that simple.”

Oh yes it can...