

Dear Friends,

In today's gospel the evangelist John recounts Jesus' healing of the man born blind. While Matthew, Mark & Luke describe Jesus' miracles as expressions of Jesus' love and compassion, John conveys Jesus' miracle to reveal the deeper meaning of his mission of salvation as the Messiah. The healing of the blind beggar intensifies the tension between Jesus and the Pharisees. The teaching of Jesus threatens the structured and elevated life of the scribes and Pharisees. They seek to discredit Jesus any way they can, and this miracle gives them the opportunity. By using spittle, mixing it with clay and rubbing it on the man's eyes, Jesus breaks the strict rules prohibiting any kind of work on the Sabbath. The miracle itself becomes secondary; the issue is really Jesus' breaking the Sabbath law. Jesus' teachings and healings threaten the comfortable lives of the religious leaders, so they seek some way to discredit what he has done. Their plan is to condemn Jesus' mixing of the mud as a clear violation of the law regarding work on the Sabbath.

The irony to the gospel is that it's not the man born blind who cannot "see," it's the others, especially the Pharisees. They are the ones who cannot see beyond themselves, beyond their presumptions and prejudices. They cannot see Jesus for who he is. Though Jesus came to restore "sight" to all, to heal that which breaks down relationships with God and neighbor, they chose to remain "blind." Healing physical blindness is a great miracle, but a far greater miracle is healing the spiritual blindness that prohibits people from seeing Jesus for who he is, and who it is that sent him.

Our belief in Christ demands that we see Jesus for who he is. It requires that we endeavor to live our lives in such a way that we imitate his selflessness and humility. Jesus calls us to see beyond appearances and look deeper into the lives of others to discover the truths of the human heart. To see the world as Jesus sees it, to see one another as Jesus sees us is to live the gospel Christ proclaimed, empowering us to rebuild our world, dispelling the darkness of hatred and injustice with the light of Christ's compassion and love.

The man Jesus healed was born blind, Jesus explains, "so that the works of God might be made visible through him." In his blindness, the man's healing becomes a sign of God's goodness and grace for his family and neighbors. Jesus calls us to that same faith; he calls us to see that the moments of our greatest pains and difficulties, our crosses, can become signs of God's grace through understanding care and patient forgiveness. He calls us to see those experiences as opportunities to be recreated in his image, and so we pray this Lent, "O Cross of Christ, Save Us."

Peace and blessings,

Father John