



March 30, 2025 Fourth Sunday of Lent

"While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." John 9:5



Dear Friends;

There is a popular Hasidic Jewish Story. Once a revered Rabbi asked his students, *"How can you tell when dawn has come, and morning prayers can be said?"* One student responded by saying, *"when you can see the sheep on the hill."* Another student suggested that one can tell that the dawn has come when a person is able to distinguish between a fig tree and a grape vine. *"No,"* said the wise old man, *"It is when you can look into the faces of human beings, and you have enough light within you to recognize them as your sisters and brothers."*

While his neighbors were probably unimpressed with the unnamed blind beggar of our story, John's Gospel presents him as representative of all humans. This implies a statement about humanity in general. Many of Jesus' listeners thought that they were exceptional people who had unique insights into the ways of God. Jesus chose the blind man *"to reveal the works of God."* Sometimes we think we see and know it all.

Just as God did not consult Adam and Eve about creating them from the clay of the earth, Jesus approaches the blind man. He forms clay that he uses as a healing earth-ointment. He never asks the man if the man wants to see. Once Jesus offers the man the possibility of sight, the man surprisingly does what Jesus tells him to do. The man washes and returns transformed.

Everything would be all right if it was not for the onlookers. It is not easy to see people in a new way. The onlookers represent the type of people who get bent out of shape when things go well for others. Their world is complete and stable. They look on the numbers of the poor, blind, and disabled as assurance that they are blessed by God. There are certain types of people who need underdogs to prop up their self-inflated importance. Today refugees, trans and LGBTQ persons, women, Muslims, and people of color are attacked to prop some up. When there is no one beneath them how can they feel important?

Jesus upsets their tidy world with a little mud and water. Who can be so sure of being chosen when the condition of blind outcasts can be changed? So, they go to the authorities, the guardians of their static world. Twice they interview the man who had been blind. He was irritating. The once-blind man failed to appreciate their logic: that what had happened to him could not come from God. His cure was accomplished by someone who did not follow the law. The man insists that *"I once was blind but now I can see. How could Jesus do this if he was not of God?"* They will not see it. The man, who now could see, will be condemned as the same kind of sinner as the healer.

In his pastoral letter, The Joy of the Gospel, Pope Francis describes the kingdoms ruled by the devil. They are places where *"everything comes under the laws of competition...where the powerful feed upon the powerless."* The people, about whom the author of John's Gospel writes, were blinded by their unshakeable convictions. All they saw was a blind beggar and sinner. Jesus saw something else. God will not be controlled by us. The purpose of the Sabbath rest was re-creation. What better way to honor the Sabbath, than by re-creating the blind man with sight? Jesus invites us to realize how blind we really are. He desires to re-create us with a vision that can see all humans as sisters and brothers.

Peace,

Fr Ron

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