

## **Sunday of the Blind Man**

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Christ is risen!

In today's Gospel reading we heard of a truly remarkable miracle – the giving of sight to a man born blind, an event which had been unheard of since the beginning of the world.

This Sunday's Gospel, like the two Sunday's before is given to us in preparation for the feast of Pentecost. Two Sunday's ago, we saw how the Lord healed the paralytic at the Sheep's Pool, and last Sunday, we saw how the Lord offered to the Samaritan woman the water of eternal life, both events prefiguring the healing and spiritual nourishment which was to come through baptism and the descent of the Holy Spirit.

And so, to the themes of spiritual healing and nourishment, the Church adds today the theme of spiritual sight.

But before we discuss the theme of spiritual sight and its importance for us, let us first say something about the miracle itself.

As the Gospel records, "Since the world began it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind."

Now as readers of the Scriptures we know that the Lord gave sight to many blind people. The Gospel of Matthew, for instance, recounts how: "the multitudes wondered, when they saw the dumb speaking, the maimed being made whole, the lame walking, and the blind receiving their sight."

And we know about the time the Lord healed the man who through demonic possession was blind and dumb. And there is also the case of the healing of the blind Bartimeus who sat by the roadside of Jericho. And many such cases.

But somehow this case is different. And the Fathers tell us, for they say that while it is certainly true that the Lord granted sight to many blind people, the case of the blind man in today's Gospel was a special case, because this man did not even have eyes, that is he physically had no eyeballs and his eye sockets were empty.

This is the reason why the Lord stooped down, picked up the dust from the earth, and with His spittle created eyes for the man, fashioning eyeballs as a sculptor would with clay. In this way, the Lord not only created physical eyes for the blind man, but He also started to open the spiritual eyes of the people.

In this way, the Lord not only revealed that He has the power to recreate and refashion man, but He also revealed that it was He Himself who had created man in the first place

– that He Himself is the God who created Adam long ago by taking dust of the earth and breathing into Him the Spirit of Life.

And in the recreation of the blind man, we see this same two-fold process. First the molding of the clay and second the giving of the Spirit. First, the man is given eyes and then he is sent to wash in the pool of Siloam – here again, like in the case of the paralytic and the Samaritan women, the Lord is teaching the people about the mystery of Baptism through the joining of water and the Spirit.

And so we see that the miraculous event in today's Gospel is much more than an ordinary healing – it is a recreation – a recreation through which the Lord reveals two things: 1) that He as the Creator of the world has the power to recreate man and 2) that He will recreate man through the waters of Baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Now returning to the theme of spiritual sight, let us say something more.

We've seen that for one to see spiritually, one needs the spiritual eyes fashioned by the Lord and given through Baptism. But just as physical eyes are of no use in darkness, so too does one need spiritual light to use one's spiritual eyes; and this spiritual light shines forth from nowhere else but Christ Who is the Light of the world.

Christ calls us to walk in the light so that we might become children of the light. In this way, we can become adopted sons and daughters of His Father, who as God is not only light but, as the Evangelist John tells us, light in Whom there is no darkness. And the Evangelist goes on to tell us that our very salvation depends on whether or not we accept this light both into our minds and hearts and also as the governing principle of our lives.

Saint John tell us that “this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that does evil hates the light, neither does he come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he that does truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.”

And so as Christians we see that our very salvation depends on whether our thoughts, words, and deeds are done in the light and truth of Christ, or whether we prefer to operate in the darkness and shadows which we sometimes naively think can cover us misdeeds and hypocrisy.

And so, to see spiritually, means to walk in the light of Christ, to think, speak, and act in a way which reflects the truth and light of godliness.

Now as we know this spiritual sight and this light of Christ are both given in Baptism, for it is through baptism that one receives the gift of adoption as a child of light.

Yet, as great a gift as Baptism is, something more is needed – and that something is spiritual diligence, a desire and effort on our part to work with the Lord for our continual cleansing and illumination.

The Lord says, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God!” In so saying the Lord directly links the vision of God with man’s purification. And this of course makes plenty of sense to us because we know that a man can’t see anything let alone God when his eyes are dirty because the impurities in his eyes obstruct his vision. This is why after the Lord put clay in the eye sockets of the blind man He then sent him to wash in the pool of Siloam so that through purification he might be able to see.

This purification is gifted to us in Baptism, but it must be maintained by avoiding the filthiness of sin which obstructs and darkens our vision of God, His Church, and each other. Otherwise, the dirtiness of sin will build up in our eyes making it impossible for us to see clearly, even though we may think our spiritual vision is excellent.

Such was the case of the Apostle Paul, who though a Pharisee, a Hebrew among Hebrews, and a man who continually read the Scriptures and prayed to God, he was a man who was spiritually blind, and so spiritually blind that he even persecuted Christ and His Church.

This is why when the Lord appeared to St. Paul on the road to Damascus He took away his physical sight, so that he would realize through this sign his own spiritual blindness. And both of these forms of blindness lasted until his baptism when, as it says in the Acts of the Apostles, scales fell from his eyes and he began to see.

Brothers and sisters, the scales of sin can cover our own eyes as well – and usually when they cover our eyes we aren’t even aware of it because our pride keeps us from seeing our true spiritual state. But these scales can be washed away through baptism, or if we have already been baptized these scales can be washed away through our tears of repentance and the renewal of our baptism in the Sacrament of Confession.

And so, as we continue in our anticipation of Pentecost, let us be raised up with the Paralytic to newness of life. Let us be nourished on the waters of the Spirit with the Samaritan woman. And let us lay aside our spiritual blindness, no longer walking in the darkness of sin, so that with the blind man in today’s Gospel we might be recreated and refashioned, washed and illumined, through the light of Christ, and in the Holy Spirit, and to the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Christ is risen!