

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT
Year A March 30, 2014

THEME: Born Blind Beggars

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Back in the 1950s, when as a child my grandmother would take me shopping in downtown Wheeling, I remember seeing a blind man begging in front of the G.C. Murphy store.

He held out a tin cup with pencils in it.

Most of all I remember his eyes; they were blue but real cloudy white.

Those eyes frightened me.

The blind man was there, I suppose because those were the days before Medicare and SSI Disability, of course, so many disabled people like the blind had to beg for a living.

I vividly recalled that blind beggar and his blue, cloudy eyes as I read our Gospel story for this Fourth Sunday of Lent.

I also wondered why the church has for many centuries turned to this particular Gospel story to help prepare itself for the approach of the Paschal Mystery, the celebration of Christ's Death and Resurrection.

How does this story of a blind beggar from the Gospel of John uniquely dispose us to what we will celebrate in just over two weeks?

There is the command of Jesus to the blind man to go to the pool of Siloam and wash, wherein he is able to see.

Perhaps this is a reference to Baptismal washing which is such a central part of our celebration of the Paschal Mystery for us.

Yet, this washing itself plays a relatively minor role in the scope of the story.

Perhaps the words of St. Paul in the Letter to the Ephesians which was our second reading today give us a clue to how we should approach the story from John's Gospel.

Paul wrote: **“Brothers and sisters,
You were once darkness,
But now you are light in the Lord.
Live as children of the light.”**

In other words, we all were born blind and beggars,

But now we can see.
We must now live as men and women who can see clearly.

The man born blind, and forced to beg, represents all of us before Christ came to us and healed and washed us.

If we carefully analyze John's story, we see the gradual progress of the man born blind coming to see who Jesus was.

When he was first asked about his healing he talked about **“the man Jesus making clay and anointing his eyes”** – to this point Jesus was just **“the man.”**

But when the Pharisees ask him about the one who opened his eyes, the man declared him to be **“a prophet.”**

Still later when the Pharisee declare Jesus to be a sinner because he doesn't keep the Sabbath, the man boldly argued with them and challenged: **“If he were not from God, he would not be able to do anything.”**

Finally, when Jesus sought him out again and asked if he believed in the Son of Man, the once blind man said: **“Who is he, sir, that I may believe in him.”**

And at Jesus word, **“You have seen him, and the one who is speaking to you is he.”**

The man worshipped him with the words: **“I do believe, Lord.”**

Step by progressive step the man born blind comes “to see” (note the word) that Jesus is the Son of Man.

Not only is his physical blindness healed, so is his spiritual blindness.

You and I were born with this same spiritual blindness.

Baptism opened our eyes that we might see.

Little by little, we have come “to see” (again note the word) who Jesus is and what he means for us and for the world.

We are no longer in the dark; we are in the light.

Jesus has opened our eyes to see God’s boundless mercy and forgiveness for every one of us.

Jesus has let us see God is a loving Father/Mother to us and thus we are in truth brothers and sisters to every other human being.

Jesus has let us see that death is not the end of us resurrection is our destiny and the Kingdom is the destiny of the world.

Jesus shed the light of his life of goodness and compassion on us and asked us to follow him as his disciples.

Again, St. Paul wrote to the Ephesians:

**“Live as children of the light,
Light produces every kind of goodness,
Righteousness and truth.
Try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.”**

Brothers and sisters, we were indeed born spiritually blind to the goodness and mercy and truth found in our God.

But thanks be to God, in Jesus Christ, we can now see clearly!

As we prepare to celebrate in just over two weeks the mystery of what God has done for us in Christ let us live as children of the light.

Let us show the world that light.

Let us let the world see the goodness and compassion and truth we have seen in Christ.

Let us show the world the light that can and will overcome all the darkness out there, including the darkness of death.