

## HOMILY

### *The Fourth Sunday of Lent*

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How's your observance of Lent going? With the help of prayer, fasting and almsgiving, have you come to see your life differently? Have you come to see that seeing is not just about eyes but about perspective? How many of us entering school had been told about a certain teacher, someone who everyone lived in fear of? By any chance, once you had time to get to know them firsthand, did you come to see them in a different light? Did you realize that the rumors about that teacher said more about his or her *detractors* than about him or her? Was that teacher one of the best teachers you ever had?

There are two kinds of seeing and blindness: Physical and spiritual. It's possible to "see" one way and be blind the other. We are all wearing glasses that cause us to see things a certain way or not see them at all. What kind of glasses? **Our presumptuous glasses!**

In today's special vignette, when Jesus and his disciples come upon this man who had been blind since birth, they asked, "*Who sinned that this man was born blind—he or his parents?*" The human assumption behind their question is still at work today: Every effect has a cause; everything that happens has an explanation. We must have someone to blame. It may be the individual. "Lung cancer, you say? Well, she was a smoker, you know." Or it may be societal. "No wonder their kids got into trouble, they were always at work making money to give their kids things. That's what's wrong with our society. It's so materialistic."

The theology behind their question also is at work today. God is the enforcer of justice. The good are rewarded. The bad are punished. Illness is a punishment for one's sins. How does Jesus answer his disciples' question? You've got to work at seeing what he is saying. Jesus answers by telling them that the assumption behind their question is wrong. Neither this man nor his parents did anything to cause his blindness. His blindness is an occasion for God's grace to be revealed in him.

Every human situation cannot be explained. Non-smokers get lung cancer. Children raised in the best of homes get into trouble. Jesus says to change your perspective. Put on a different set of glasses. Instead of worrying about whom to blame, look for how God is seeking to bring good out of bad.

God is not interested in punishing us for our past. God's focus is on our future. God wants to take away our hurt and bring healing so that we may glorify him. God wants to wash away our past so that we will be free to serve him.

Jesus heals a man blind from birth. The religious experts presume they know who God is and how God works. The blind man was healed on the Sabbath by Jesus, who made mud with his saliva and dirt, spread it on the man's eyes, and then told him to go and wash. According to Sabbath law, making mud on the Sabbath was prohibited. Thus, Jesus is a sinner and God doesn't use sinners to work miracles.

Their belief blinded them to a God bigger than what their religion had taught them. It put glasses on them that kept them from seeing what was right in front of them. They have eyes to see, but they don't see.

Though Jesus actually healed the man born blind, Jesus actually gave him much more: **Jesus opened his eyes to the ways of faith.**

The message is clear, not only to the people of Jesus' day, but to us as well. We must seek the spiritual sight which only Jesus can give. Lent is the time when through honesty and self-evaluation we shake off the darkness that surrounds us in blindness. We are asked to seek the light and avoid the darkness.

Today, as the rest of this day unfolds, you might give yourself a spiritual vision exam. Close your eyes. Turn down the music. A follower of Jesus ought to be able to see, not with physical eyes, perhaps, but certainly with spiritual ones. How do you see other people? How do you see God? How do you see all the good things that happen in your life?

Do you see them as accidental? Do you see them as something you deserve because of your hard work? Or do you see them as gifts of God? Do you see your life, not as a challenge to be endured, but as a gift to be received and treasured, shared and enjoyed?

The choice is yours. But I can promise you, it will make all the difference in way you see your life.

How do you see the not-so-good things?

