

- One of the most poignant parts of our Gospel today is in the very beginning...when the apostles ask Jesus: “...*who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?*”
- And Jesus answers: “*Neither;...it is so the works of God might be visible in him.*”
- It is our tendency to seek an explanation for suffering in cause and effect—that there must be a connection between prior sin and present suffering.
- Certainly there may be such a connection...especially if one actively disregards God in his life.
- But suffering is not necessarily a sign of divine disfavor...and certainly not “unfairness” from God...which is actually literally impossible.
- But perhaps...and maybe even most commonly...like the case of the blind man in our Gospel story...suffering is not a end of a previous road traveled, but rather a path leading to somewhere better...leading to a much greater destination.
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- We see this many times in scripture: In Genesis Joseph was sold as a slave by his brothers, but when he saves Egypt from famine and rules over his brothers, he realizes God’s plan, telling them: “*Fear not, for am I in the place of God?...you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive...*” (Gen 50:19-20 RSV)
- Would the blind man have come to know Jesus had he NOT been blind? Would lepers had not come to Jesus if they had not first been lepers, and come to Him to be healed?
- We remember the great sufferings of the apostles and disciples of Jesus...and yet, through their faithfulness they facilitate the spread of the Kingdom of God on earth.

- We remember the temporary suffering of the saints which led them to a greater, eternal holiness. Ignatius Loyola's wounds in battle led him to faith. St. Therese's suffering with TB and other painful disease led her to a deeper contemplation and love of God. St. Maximilian Kolbe's imprisonment in Auschwitz led to the deepening of his faith, to giving his life to save another...and receive eternal reward in Heaven.
- And, of course, the very embodiment of undeserved suffering: Jesus upon the cross...from which blossoms the greatest good of all—our salvation.
- Indeed, the apostles exhort us always to be patient in suffering, such as when James tells us: *“Count it all joy, my brethren, when you meet various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness...”* (Jam 1:2-4)...and St. Paul tells us: *“I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”* (Rom 8:18 RSV)
- So we should not view our sufferings so much as punishment, but as reminders, and opportunities, to reorient our lives and to deepen our faith...deepen our commitment and fidelity to Christ...as we recall how all in this life passes away so very rapidly...but our place after this life never passes away—Heaven if we are faithful...and Hell if we are not.
- If we despise and avoid suffering so much, is it not better...is it not simply common sense!...to work that we may never suffer again in eternity...that we suffer a little in the here and now if necessary to ensure eternal joy and love forever with Him who loves us without limit.
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- This is why Jesus tells us today: *“We have to do the works of the one who sent me while it is day [while we live]. Night is coming when no one can work.”* ...which can be interpreted either as the

final judgment, or simply our own death...when all opportunity to be faithful to God and to do works of charity is ended.

- The blind man in our Gospel doesn't lament his years of blindness, but rejoices in his healing...and bows before Jesus in thanksgiving.
- He realizes the power of God in Jesus...and he realizes the gratuitous favor which he has undeservingly enjoyed in his healing.
- Likewise, when we see the faithlessness...the hopelessness...in so many people in the world around us...should we not, too, fall down at the feet of Jesus...realizing the favor He has given us in knowing Him in His Church...in receiving Him in the Eucharist.
- Not only do we receive grace...but we receive Him within ourselves who is the very source of grace...the font of "living water" residing within us each time we come to communion.
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- The blind man comes to his sight...and those with eyes—the Pharisees, the supposed scholars of the things of God--wallow in their blindness.
- They refused to believe even with irrefutable evidence before them...a man blind from birth gaining his sight...a miracle that not even the prophets accomplished.
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- Now the way that Jesus heals the blind man is, in itself, interesting for us. He spits on the ground and makes a type of mud paste, and smears it on the man's eyes.
- Did Jesus HAVE to use that? No; He is God...and can heal with His mere desire to do so.
- So why do it? Well...think about it; he used material means to impart grace...and what does that remind us of?
- Jesus foreshadows the healing nature of the sacraments—physical signs instituted by Christ to impart divine grace...divine healing.

- I find it interesting that he uses clay paste...for from what did God make us? “You are dirt, and to dirt you shall return.”
- Jesus as God is our Creator, along with the Father and the Holy Spirit. This story seems to be relating that God “left something out” of the blind man...and comes back later to make him whole “*so that the works of God might be manifest in him,*” as Jesus says.
- And so misfortunes do not necessarily denote disfavor of God, but are opportunities for charity and the deepening of our faith.
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- So let us reject the blindness of the world...reject devotion to the world’s idols of fame, wealth, selfishness and sexual excess...and remember St. Paul today as he reminds us: “*Brethren, you were once darkness, but now are light in the Lord. Live as children of light, for light produces every kind of goodness and righteousness and truth...*”
- *...Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.”*

**Fourth Sunday of Lent**

**Lectionary: 31**

**Reading 11 SM 16:1B, 6-7, 10-13A**

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The LORD said to Samuel:

“Fill your horn with oil, and be on your way. [olive oil used in anointing; used in oils today]  
I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem,  
for I have chosen my king from among his sons.”

As Jesse and his sons came to the sacrifice,  
Samuel looked at Eliab and thought,  
“Surely the LORD’s anointed is here before him.”

But the LORD said to Samuel:

“Do not judge from his appearance or from his lofty stature,  
because I have rejected him.

**Not as man sees does God see,  
because man sees the appearance  
but the LORD looks into the heart.”**

In the same way Jesse presented seven sons before Samuel,  
but Samuel said to Jesse,

“The LORD has not chosen any one of these.”

Then Samuel asked Jesse,

“Are these all the sons you have?”

Jesse replied,

“There is still the youngest, who is tending the sheep.”

Samuel said to Jesse,

“Send for him;

we will not begin the sacrificial banquet until he arrives here.”

Jesse sent and had the young man brought to them.

He was ruddy, a youth handsome to behold  
and making a splendid appearance.

The LORD said,

“There—anoint him, for this is the one!”

**Then Samuel, with the horn of oil in hand,  
anointed David in the presence of his brothers;  
and from that day on, the spirit of the LORD rushed upon David.**

**Responsorial Psalm PS 23:1-3A, 3B-4, 5, 6**

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R/ (1) **The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.**

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

In verdant pastures he gives me repose;

beside restful waters he leads me;

he refreshes my soul.

R/ **The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.**

He guides me in right paths  
for his name's sake.  
Even though I walk in the dark valley  
I fear no evil; for you are at my side  
With your rod and your staff  
that give me courage.

R/ **The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.**

You spread the table before me  
in the sight of my foes;  
you anoint my head with oil;  
my cup overflows.

R/ **The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.**

Only goodness and kindness follow me  
all the days of my life;  
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD  
for years to come.

R/ **The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.**

**Reading 2 [EPH 5:8-14](#)**

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Brothers and sisters:

You were once darkness,  
but now you are light in the Lord.  
Live as children of light,  
for light produces every kind of goodness  
and righteousness and truth.  
Try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.  
Take no part in the fruitless works of darkness;  
rather expose them, for it is shameful even to mention  
the things done by them in secret;  
but everything exposed by the light becomes visible,  
for everything that becomes visible is light.  
Therefore, it says:  
“Awake, O sleeper,  
and arise from the dead,  
and Christ will give you light.”

**Gospel [JN 9:1-41](#)**

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As Jesus passed by he saw a man blind from birth.  
His disciples asked him,  
“Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents,  
that he was born blind?”  
Jesus answered,  
“Neither he nor his parents sinned;  
it is so that the works of God might be made visible through him.  
We have to do the works of the one who sent me while it is day. [*while living*]

**Year A—Lent, 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday**  
(2014)

Night is coming when no one can work. [*can't work after death*]  
While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." [*a light guides and shows the way*]  
When he had said this, he spat on the ground [*saliva of important person thought to have curative properties; analogous to future sacraments*]  
and made clay with the saliva,  
and smeared the clay on his eyes, [*creative; like creator adding on something that was missing*]  
and said to him,  
"Go wash in the Pool of Siloam" —which means Sent—. .  
So he went and washed, and came back able to see.

His neighbors and those who had seen him earlier as a beggar said,  
"Isn't this the one who used to sit and beg?"  
Some said, "It is, "  
but others said, "No, he just looks like him."  
He said, "I am."  
So they said to him, "How were your eyes opened?"  
He replied,  
"The man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes [*"man"; will eventually call Him prophet, then God*]  
and told me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.'  
So I went there and washed and was able to see."  
And they said to him, "Where is he?"  
He said, "I don't know."

They brought the one who was once blind to the Pharisees.  
Now Jesus had made clay and opened his eyes on a sabbath.  
So then the Pharisees also asked him how he was able to see.  
He said to them,  
"He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and now I can see."  
So some of the Pharisees said,  
"This man is not from God,  
because he does not keep the sabbath."  
But others said,  
"How can a sinful man do such signs?"  
And there was a division among them.  
So they said to the blind man again,  
"What do you have to say about him,  
since he opened your eyes?"  
He said, "He is a prophet."

Now the Jews did not believe  
that he had been blind and gained his sight  
until they summoned the parents of the one who had gained his sight.  
They asked them,  
"Is this your son, who you say was born blind?  
How does he now see?"  
His parents answered and said,

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(2014)

“We know that this is our son and that he was born blind.  
We do not know how he sees now,  
nor do we know who opened his eyes.  
Ask him, he is of age;  
he can speak for himself.”  
His parents said this because they were afraid  
of the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed  
that if anyone acknowledged him as the Christ,  
he would be expelled from the synagogue.  
For this reason his parents said,  
“He is of age; question him.”

So a second time they called the man who had been blind  
and said to him, “Give God the praise! [an admonition to be truthful]  
We know that this man is a sinner.” [contrasts with fact that Jesus is sinless]  
He replied,  
“If he is a sinner, I do not know. [wisdom; judges not, but sees effects]  
One thing I do know is that I was blind and now I see.”  
So they said to him,  
“What did he do to you?  
How did he open your eyes?”  
He answered them,  
“I told you already and you did not listen.  
Why do you want to hear it again?  
Do you want to become his disciples, too?”  
They ridiculed him and said, [refuse to believe even the proof before them]  
“You are that man’s disciple;  
we are disciples of Moses!  
We know that God spoke to Moses,  
but we do not know where this one is from.”  
The man answered and said to them,  
“This is what is so amazing,  
that you do not know where he is from, yet he opened my eyes.  
We know that God does not listen to sinners,  
but if one is devout and does his will, he listens to him. [attests to truth, and the holiness of Jesus]  
It is unheard of that anyone ever opened the eyes of a person born blind. [not even the prophets did this]  
If this man were not from God,  
he would not be able to do anything.”  
They answered and said to him,  
“You were born totally in sin,  
and are you trying to teach us?”  
Then they threw him out. [do not answer his arguments]

When Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, [courage under challenge; testify to truth]  
he found him and said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”  
He answered and said,  
“Who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?”

Jesus said to him,  
“You have seen him,  
the one speaking with you is he.”  
He said,  
“I do believe, Lord,” and he worshiped him. [sees him as God]  
Then Jesus said,  
“I came into this world for judgment,  
so that those who do not see might see,  
and those who do see might become blind.”

Some of the Pharisees who were with him heard this  
and said to him, “Surely we are not also blind, are we?”  
Jesus said to them,  
“If you were blind, you would have no sin;  
but now you are saying, ‘We see,’ so your sin remains.

**Or [JN 9:1, 6-9, 13-17, 34-38](#)**

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