

Caritas Fellowship

Miracles 5—The Man Born Blind

3 November 2011

John 9:1-41

As he passed by, he saw a man blind from his birth. 2 And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" 3 Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him. 4 We must work the works of him who sent me, while it is day; night comes, when no one can work. 5 As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." 6 As he said this, he spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle and anointed the man's eyes with the clay, 7 saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Silo'am" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.



8 The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar, said, "Is not this the man who used to sit and beg?" 9 Some said, "It is he"; others said, "No, but he is like him." He said, "I am the man." 10 They said to him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" 11 He answered, "The man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to Silo'am and wash'; so I went and washed and received my sight." 12 They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know." 13 They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind.

14 Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. 15 The Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, "He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see." 16 Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" There was a division among them. 17 So they again said to the blind man, "What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet."

18 The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight, until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight, 19 and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" 20 His parents answered, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; 21 but how he now sees we do not know, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age, he will speak for himself." 22 His parents said this because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if any one should confess him to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue. 23 Therefore his parents said, "He is of age, ask him."

24 So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and said to him, "Give God the praise; we know that this man is a sinner." 25 He answered, "Whether he is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I know, that though I was blind, now I see." 26 They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" 27 He answered them, "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you too want to become his disciples?" 28 And they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. 29 We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from." 30 The man answered, "Why, this is a marvel! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. 31 We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if any one is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him. 32 Never since the world began has it been heard that any one opened the eyes of a man born blind. 33 If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." 34 They answered him, "You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?" And they cast him out.

35 Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, "Do you believe in the Son of man?" 36 He answered, "And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?" 37 Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and it is he who speaks to you." 38 He said, "Lord, I believe"; and he worshiped him. 39 Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind." 40 Some of the Pharisees near him heard this, and they said to him, "Are we also blind?" 41 Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains.

John Paul II

The man born blind represents the human person marred by sin, who desires to know the truth about himself and his personal destiny, but is prevented from doing so by congenital illness. Only Jesus can cure him: He is "the light of

the world" (Jn 9,5). Handing himself over to him, every human being who is spiritually blind from birth has the fresh possibility of "coming to the light", namely to supernatural life.

Along with the healing of the blind man, the Gospel highlights the unbelief of the Pharisees, who refuse to acknowledge the miracle, since Jesus worked it on the Sabbath, in their judgment violating the Mosaic law. Thus, an eloquent paradox emerges, that Christ himself sums up with the words: "I have come into the world for judgment so that those who do not see might see, and those who do see might become blind" (Jn 9,39).

For the one who meets Christ, there is no other alternative: either he recognizes his need of him and of his light, or he chooses to do without. In the case of doing without Christ, the same presumption prevents both the one who thinks he is just before God and the one who considers himself an atheist, from being open to authentic conversion.

Dear brothers and sisters, may no one close his soul to Christ! He gives to the one who accepts him the light of faith, the light that can transform the heart, and, consequently, mentalities, social, political, and economic situations dominated by sin. "... I do believe, Lord!" (Jn 9,38). With the man born blind, may each of us be ready humbly to profess our own attachment to him.

Benedict XVI

The question which the Lord Jesus asks the blind man is the high point of the story: "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" (Jn 9:35). The man recognizes the sign worked by Jesus and he passes from the light of his eyes to the light of faith: "Lord, I believe!" (Jn 9:38).

It should be noted that as a simple and sincere person he gradually completes the journey of faith. In the beginning he thinks of Jesus as a "man" among others, then he considers him a "prophet" and finally his eyes are opened and he proclaims him "Lord". In opposition to the faith of the healed blind man is the hardening of the hearts of the Pharisees who do not want to accept the miracle because they refuse to receive Jesus as the Messiah. Instead the crowd pauses to discuss the event and continues to be distant and indifferent. Even the blind man's parents are overcome by the fear of what others might think.

And what attitude to Jesus should we adopt? Because of Adam's sin we too are born "blind" but in the baptismal font we are illumined by the grace of Christ. Sin wounded humanity and destined it to the darkness of death, but the newness of life shines out in Christ, as well as the destination to which we are called. In him, reinvigorated by the Holy Spirit, we receive the strength to defeat evil and to do good.

In fact the Christian life is a continuous conformation to Christ, image of the new man, in order to reach full communion with God. The Lord Jesus is the "light of the world" (Jn 8:12), because in him shines "the knowledge of the glory of God" (2 Cor 4:6) that continues in the complex plot of the story to reveal the meaning of human existence.

George Rutler

Jesus is not content with giving the blind man physical sight. Of course, He deals with the pedantry of the Pharisees like someone flicking a gnat, but His attention is toward that man who suddenly can see with his eyes, but needs yet to see with his soul.

William Temple

Every manifestation of the divine word is illumination of the world; and that manifestation is all around us; but we are blind from birth and pay no heed, till he anoints our eyes...

The man who is driven out of the Pharisaic court is not left to wander as an outcast. Jesus *found* him. The man did not find Jesus; Jesus found him. That is the deepest truth of the Christian faith; Jesus found me. Our fellowship with him is rooted in his compassion.

For it is into his fellowship that he welcomes the blind beggar; and to do this, he offers himself for the first time as an object of faith. Westcott sees here "the beginning of the new Society"... the Lord offers himself as an object of faith, and does this as a way of receiving His fellowship one who is alienated from another.

Bono

You see, at the center of all religions is the idea of Karma. You know, what you put out comes back to you: an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, or in physics—in physical laws—every action is met by an equal or an opposite one. It's clear to me that Karma is at the very heart of the universe. I'm absolutely sure of it. And yet, along comes this idea called Grace to upend all that "as you reap, so you will sow" stuff. Grace defies reason and logic. Love interrupts, if you

like, the consequences of your actions, which in my case is very good news indeed, because I've done a lot of stupid stuff... That's between me and God. But I'd be in big trouble if Karma was going to finally be my judge. I'd be in deep s~. It doesn't excuse my mistakes, but I'm holding out for Grace. I'm holding out that Jesus took my sins onto the Cross, because I know who I am, and I hope I don't have to depend on my own religiosity...

But I love the idea of the Sacrificial Lamb. I love the idea that God says: Look, you cretins, there are certain results to the way we are, to selfishness, and there's a mortality as part of your very sinful nature, and, let's face it, you're not living a very good life, are you? There are consequences to actions. The point of the death of Christ is that Christ took on the sins of the world, so that what we put out did not come back to us, and that our sinful nature does not reap the obvious death. That's the point. It should keep us humbled... . It's not our own good works that get us through the gates of heaven.

Helen Keller

Whether love makes one blind, I don't know. But that love can help one see, I and others have experienced that a thousand times.

Origen

May the Lord Jesus touch our eyes, as he did those of the blind—then we shall begin to see in visible things those which are invisible.

May He open our eyes to gaze not on present realities, but on the blessings to come.

May he open the eyes of our heart to contemplate God in Spirit, through Jesus Christ the Lord, to whom belong power and glory through all eternity. Amen.

