

## Fourth Sunday of Lent

March 18, 2012

Today's reading about the blind man brought to enlightenment by Jesus carries with it the strong theme of John's whole Gospel: From darkness to light in Christ. But it is also about knowing and not knowing. The word "know" is found in seven of the story's verses. *Who* knows and *how* one knows are central to the story.

At first the man tells the religious leaders that he doesn't even know where Jesus is. The only thing the man clings to is his experience: "One thing I do know is that I was blind and now I see." The man is on a journey of faith. He grows in knowledge of Jesus. At first he calls Jesus a man, then a prophet, and finally, "Lord." The religious leaders, the experts of the day, never make the journey with Jesus. They are so certain, so smug in what they think they know that their very certainty prevents their openness to Jesus and where his authority comes from.

The liturgy we celebrate today is about knowing who we are and who God is in our lives. This Fourth Sunday of Lent has ancient prayers and readings. This same gospel story of the blind man was proclaimed and preached about in the fourth century by St. Augustine, who said in his homily: "Now I am speaking, of course, to both faithful and catechumens. What did I say of the spittle and mud? That the Word became flesh. That is what the catechumens learn. But it is not enough for them to have been anointed. Let them hasten on to the font if they seek the Light."

Notice that Augustine addressed both the faithful and those who were preparing for Easter sacraments. Our Elect, Sam and Kyle, are wonderful reminders to us old-timers in the Church about what our Christian lives are all about: It is about growing, growing in the knowledge that comes from communion with Christ.

We heard St. Paul tell us today that once we were in darkness, but now by baptism we are in the light of the Lord. But then he gives us an invitation: to live as children of the light. Just because we are in the Church, we are Christians, we

are Catholics, does not mean that we are not prone to darkness, to sin, to the foolishness of thinking we know it all. The only guarantee our baptism gives us is that it gives us the possibility and invitation to live as children of light, always knowing that we are not there yet, that we need to learn, need to grow, need to change.

Lent is a time for all of us, both baptized and those preparing for baptism, to ponder both what we know and what we don't know about ourselves and about our God. Frederick Buechner, a minister, poet, and novelist, in his book *Whistling in the Dark*, wrote about Lent as a time to ask ourselves important questions. I invite you to reflect silently on some questions he offers:

"If you had to bet everything you have on whether there is a God or whether there isn't, which side would get your money and why?

When you look at your face in the mirror, what do you see in it that you most like and what do you see in it that you most deplore?

If you had only one last message to leave to the handful of people who are most important to you, what would it be in twenty-five words or less?

Of all the things you have done in your life, which is the one you would most like to undo? Which is the one that makes you happiest to remember?

Is there any person in the world, or any cause, that, if circumstances called for it, you would be willing to die for?

If this were the last day of your life, what would you do with it?"

To begin to listen to our own answers to such questions is to begin to know what the journey of Lent is all about, and to know what about ourselves and about our God that is most important. It is to begin to know Amazing Grace, since I too "once was lost but now I'm found, was blind but now I see!"

Paul A. Magnano

Pastor