

DO YOU SEE WHAT I SEE?

Last week Jesus' dialogue with the Samaritan woman alluded to the waters of baptism. This week we see something similar to the man born blind who washes in the pool of Siloam.

An ancient name for the sacrament of baptism is that of enlightenment. Even today, the baptismal ritual of children says, *These children of yours have been enlightened by Christ, they are to walk always as children of the light.* The word for last week was *water*. The word for this week is *light*.

This gospel is rich in the symbolism that tells us about baptism. This man is born blind, which represents the darkness of sin with which we're all born. Sometimes, it's described as the stain of original sin, that not quite rightness that we all have to deal with in life. Then, with literally, a very earthy image, Jesus creates mud that symbolized that while we were created from dust, we are to become a new creation in Christ. In it we can also find the anointing that is given prior to baptism.

Next, Jesus tells the man to go and wash in the Pool of Siloam which means the one who has been sent. This obviously refers to baptism but Jesus is also the one who has been sent. This man grows bolder in his proclamation which gets him thrown out. He loses his home and yet he is to find a new one.

Eventually, the man returns to Jesus, where he receives further instruction. This corresponds to the further teaching in the faith that one receives after baptism. Finally, with gratitude we presume, he worships. He worships Jesus who is truly God as well as truly human.

In baptism we are freed from sin; reborn as children of God, become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission, cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1213. Baptism leads us to the Eucharist where we too, worship Jesus.

Being enlightened means leaving behind darkness behind. The Pharisees insist they are not blind but Jesus intimates something else. There are different types of blindness. There's a blindness of the eyes there's also a moral, intellectual and emotional blindness, a blindness of the heart. Sometimes we are blind because we can't see, and other times because we won't see. We don't see because we don't want to see or because we are afraid to see. Fear, pride, anger, envy, sloth,

disordered wants and other failings can blind us. These might not be physical blindness but they are very real.

The Pharisees in this story don't seem to want to believe. It's as if they are working hard to not believe and we are capable of doing the same thing. Pride can block our vision. Humility allows us to see.

But the light has a price. It can also lead to expulsion, e.g., doctors who refuse to engage in unethical medical practices, pharmacists who refuse to prescribe abortion pills, business people who refuse to cheat or lie and many others who will not cooperate with evil. History is filled both great saints and ordinary people who through the centuries have paid the price for the light or what you could call the light bill.

There is a Christmas song we hear every year that *asks*. *Do you see what I see?* It recounts the experiences of different people around the birth of Jesus. But that line, *Do you see what I see?*, applies to our readings today.

In the first reading Samuel is sent to anoint a king from the sons of Jesse, and he thinks he has found one. He sees things one way but God sees them a different way and that's what he tells Samuel. *Not as man sees does God see, because man sees the appearance but God looks into the heart.* Samuel isn't physically blind and yet he does not see what God sees. He doesn't see as God sees until God reveals it to him, until God enlightens him. When God does this, Samuel anoints David king.

Like Samuel, we strive to be open to God as he prods us out of blindness. Like that man born blind, seeing can cost us something but seeing can also gain us something, something much more valuable. In the second reading St. Paul reminds the Ephesians and us that we too have been called out of darkness into the light.

Even in times of darkness, Jesus offers us new life. Through our baptism, we are united to his dying and rising, his Paschal Mystery. Because of that, even in times of pandemic, Jesus continues to be hope and we continue to be a people of hope. Because Jesus has risen from the dead, despair is a luxury not given to Christians.

We give thanks and we worship. Even in the midst of a crisis, we offer thanks. We give thanks for the knowledge of modern science and warns us and informs us, for those working on vaccines and those serving the sick, we give thanks for technology that allows us to stay together. As Christians we never pray alone, we always pray as members of the Body of Christ and we continue to worship together, even when we are physically apart.

With lives of intentional faith, even times of crisis and perhaps especially in times of crisis, may we always see what Jesus sees, serves as Jesus serves and love as Jesus loves. The word for last week was *water*, the word for this week is *light*. The word for next week will be *life*.