

## GOSPEL

JOHN 9:1,6-9,13-17,34-38

As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. He spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, saying to him, 'Go, wash in the pool of Siloam'. Then he went and washed and came back able to see. The neighbours and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, 'Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?' Some were saying, 'It is he.' Others were saying, 'No, but it is someone like him.' He kept saying, 'I am the man.'

They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, 'He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see.' Some of the Pharisees said, 'This man is not from God, for he does not observe the sabbath.' But others said, 'How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?' And they were divided. So they said again to the blind man, 'What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened.' He said, 'He is a prophet.' They answered him, 'You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?' And they drove him out.

Jesus heard that they had driven him out of the synagogue, and when he found him, he said, 'Do you believe in the Son of Man?' He answered, 'And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him.' Jesus said to him, 'You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he.' He said, 'Lord, I believe.' And he worshipped him.

## A REFLECTION BY POPE FRANCIS

At the centre of the Gospel this Fourth Sunday of Lent we find Jesus and a man blind from birth. Christ restores his sight and performs this miracle with a type of symbolic ritual: first, He mixes dirt with saliva and spreads it on the blind man's eyes; then, He orders him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. The man goes, washes, and regains his sight. He was blind from birth. With this miracle, Jesus manifests himself, and He manifests himself to us as the *Light of the World*. The man blind from birth represents each one of us, who was created to know God; but due to sin has become blind; we are in need of a new light; we are all in need of a new light: that of faith, which Jesus has given us. Indeed, that blind man in the Gospel, by regaining his sight, is opened to the mystery of Christ. Jesus asks him: "Do

you believe in the Son of man?". "And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?", the healed blind man replied. "You have seen him, and it is he who speaks to you". "Lord, I believe", [the blind man said,] and he prostrated himself before Jesus.

This episode induces us to reflect on our faith, our faith in Christ, the Son of God; and at the same time, it also refers to *Baptism*, which is the first Sacrament of faith: the Sacrament which makes us "come to the light", by being reborn through the water and through the Holy Spirit; as happens to the man born blind, whose eyes are opened after being cleansed in the water of the pool of Siloam. The man born blind and healed represents us when we do not realize that Jesus is the light; he is "the Light of the World", when we are looking elsewhere, when we prefer to entrust ourselves to little lights, when we are groping in the dark. The fact that the blind man has no name helps us to see our face reflected and our name in his story. We too have been "*illuminated*" by Christ in Baptism, and thus we are called to behave as children of the light. Acting as children of the light requires a radical change of mind-set, a capacity to judge men and things according to another scale of values, which comes from God. The Sacrament of Baptism, in fact, requires the choice of living as children of the light and walking in the light. If I were to ask you: "Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God? Do you believe that he can change your heart? Do you believe that he can show reality as he sees it, not as we see it? Do you believe that he is light, that he gives us the true light?". How would you answer? Each of you, respond in your heart.

What does it mean to have the true light, to *walk in the light*? First of all it means abandoning false lights: the cold, vain light of prejudice against others, because prejudice distorts reality and ladens us with aversion to those whom we judge without mercy and condemn without appeal. This is our daily bread! When you gossip about others, you do not walk in the light, you walk in shadows. Another false light, because it is seductive and ambiguous, is that of self-interest: if we value men and things on the basis of usefulness to us, of pleasure, of prestige, we are not truthful in our relationships and situations. If we go down this path of seeking self-interest, we are walking in shadows.

May the Blessed Virgin, who was the first to welcome Jesus, the Light of the World, obtain for us this grace of welcoming anew

the light of faith this Lent, rediscovering the inestimable gift of Baptism, which all of us have received. And may this new illumination transform us in attitude and action, so that we too, beginning with our poverty, our narrow-mindedness, may be bearers of a ray of the light of Christ.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Describe your own experience of a moment of 'enlightenment' where your thoughts and attitudes have been changed?
- The Pharisees failed to see 'the heart of the matter', only caring about and judging external practices. In what ways have you experienced this same reality in your life? What is the challenge for you?
- How has Jesus' presence in your life enabled you to 'see things differently'? What have been the results?

## PRAYER

*Spend some time in prayer with one another*

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. "Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray")
3. Move to prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others' prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps reciting the 'Glory Be' or similar prayer.