

Vespers Homily

The Fourth Sunday of Lent

March 15, 2015

Psalm 23
John 9:1-41

In the name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

A man born blind in a world grown dark. He has never known what it means to see light.

The world in which he lives had once known what the light means. They had known the presence of God in their lives, lived according to His wishes and His commandments. He had been their God and they had been His people.

But they had drifted away, following other gods that seemed to promise them a comfortable present rather than a bright future. They had flirted with idols of all sorts. Now they have one idol that takes the place of God in their lives: it's the Law; it's Torah.

The man born blind hears the voice of an unseen Jesus; he feels the touch of the hands of Jesus gently spreading a cooling mud on his eyes, a mixture of dust and the spittle of Jesus. He hears Jesus say, "Go and wash in the pool of Siloam." He goes and washes as the voice has sent him, and light suddenly, immediately, enters the man's life, penetrates the darkness in which he has always existed.

He has no idea whose voice he heard or whose hands had touched him. When asked "Who did this?" he can only say, "He is a prophet."

In scripture a prophet is not one who predicts the future: a prophet is one who speaks for another, specifically for a deity. The man with sudden sight knows that his sight is from a divine intervention. God in Jesus Christ has drawn very, very near.

Our memory goes back to the second chapter of Genesis and the second story of Creation. God forms Adam, forms mankind, from the dust of the earth, mixed with the mists to form a mud. Mankind is shaped by God and is made complete by God's breath of life; the man born blind is made complete by the hands and presence of Jesus.

It is a case of the light shining in a dark world. The Jews with whom the man has existed all his life cannot accept the thought that the pitiful blind man has been made whole. It must be a mistake. It must be someone who looks like him.

The Pharisees cannot accept that God would show such favor to a man they considered to be a sinner. His blindness must have been a sign of God's disfavor to the man or to the man's family. Perhaps they are all sinners. Any affliction or deformity was a sure sign of that.

As for this Jesus person, He is obviously a sinner. If the man's story is true, this Jesus made mud on the Sabbath; He performed an act of work on the Sabbath, something clearly against the Law Code of Torah. They need look no further than the letter of the Law on which they base their faith to dismiss the man born blind and Jesus with one stroke. Their world grows darker.

It can be a dark world today. There are a great many Pharisees today, in and out of the Christian churches, that base their faith entirely on the written words of the Bible, without knowing the subtlety and complexity of those words, without really understanding their meaning. I might add that for some reason they are drawn to conversing with Episcopal clergy. Tragically, they, like the Pharisees in our readings, judge the world. Theirs is a cold, dry, rational world

that admits of no sudden infusions of light by the presence of the Divine.

The light, the spiritual presence of God in Jesus, actually filled the man born blind long before he washed in the pool of Siloam. It filled him with the first sense of Jesus' presence, the first sense of His touch. "Faith is believing in things you cannot see." In his Second Letter to the church in Corinth, Paul says, "We walk by faith and not by sight." It is faith that sends him to do as the unseen Jesus had said. It is faith that opens his eyes to the world. It is faith that empowers him to speak to the Jews and the Pharisees.

It is his faith that calls him to say "Lord, I believe."

In His Holy Name.