

Fourth Sunday of Lent – A readings

The story about the man born blind is significant, for one reason, because it is precisely about a man born blind. The fact that the man is blind from birth has a lot of symbolic value because it shares in a basic characteristic of creation—it's not perfect. What can Jesus do about the basic imperfection of creation?

And, as is usually the case with John's gospel, there is a spiritual parallel to the man's physical blindness that Jesus will want to get at, too.

At the beginning of the story the man will quickly be cured of his physical blindness. The dramatic element in the story comes after that: will the man be able to learn to follow the sign of his own physical healing to arrive at a spiritual insight: who is this person who had healed him.

To add to the drama, the Pharisees arrive on the scene, and they will be confronted with the same necessity: can they learn to follow the sign of the man's healing and arrive at the spiritual insight?

The details of the healing itself, especially the gesture of spitting on the ground and making clay to smear on the man's eyes, show that Jesus is capable of completing creation. What was not completed at the man's birth, is brought to full functionality now.

The only step left in the creative process is to open his spiritual eyes to see and respond to the Divine Source of healing.

Eventually, we read that that is exactly what happens—with the man born blind, at least. He comes

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to realize and then witnesses to the truth about who it was that opened his eyes.

Actually, it's the Pharisees who help him arrive at that point. They themselves are adamant about retaining their image of God, which highlights above all else that God is a maker and enforcer of laws. Since the healing occurred on a Sabbath, all they can see is that Jesus could not possibly be from God. Breaking the Sabbath law means for them that Jesus has to be a sinner.

The man born blind simply follows what actually happened. In spite of the pressure placed on him to change his story, and assign the miracle to some other actor, he sticks with what he knows, and under the scrutiny of the Pharisees keeps delving deeper into its meaning. He may not be a disciple yet, but he is a disciple-in-the-making.

When the conflict finally comes to a head, and the Pharisees have no choice but to drive him out of the synagogue if they want to keep intact their image of God, Jesus finds him. Jesus takes the initiative again and completes the process of bringing creation to fulfillment. He invites the man to belief in him.

If we are attentive to the miracles, some large, most small, that have taken place in our presence, we are in a good position to follow the same path taken by the man born blind.

But being attentive to miracles requires, by necessity, that we be careful about the images of God that we

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operate from. If God is for us primarily a law-maker and law enforcer, it's going to be hard to see the miraculous.

But if we allow ourselves to live in a creation that is still and always moving toward fulfillment, then we can participate in that process of coming to insight about how God is leading us into the fullness of whom he calls us to be.

The catechumenal process is really a great luxury because it is designed with just this purpose in mind. Our elect have received training to open the eyes of their heart to behold the glory of God fulfilling his promise to create a new heaven and a new earth, to not leave undone any of the plans he has for us.

Our elect stand here today resolute in their intention to let this process play out in their lives and to resist any temptation to cut God down to size so that he fits into merely human notions of who he is and what he should be about.

As the community of believers to which these elect are joining themselves, we can do no less. We also have to give ourselves over to paying attention to what God is doing in our lives; not focusing so exclusively on what we want him to do, but being humble enough to trust that what he is doing will bring us to the desired end.

There's a miracle there waiting to be discovered. Will our eyes see it?