

# *Sins That Blind*

The Gospel today is simple yet complex. In the beginning we are told of a man blind from birth who was likely asking for alms as he was ultimately unable to support himself. One could conclude that this story is timely as our Lenten season is underway. After all alms giving are one of the 3 Pillars of Lent: Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving.

Almsgiving is prescribed in Deuteronomy as something that is supposed to be done generously and without grudges. However, almsgiving does not appear to be on the top of the disciples' minds though because as soon as the blind man is encountered the disciples immediately divert their attentions to assessing blame. Since they come to know that the blind man was blind since birth they want to know whose sin caused this – his parents or himself? The disciples aren't entirely to blame as it was a common belief in those days that all disease and disabilities arose from sin. It doesn't seem that Jesus' disciples were in a giving mood. Taking this further perhaps the disciples wondered if the man was worthy of giving. Jesus had a laser focus on what needed to be done and he did it. The man needed healing and Jesus provided one of his most well-known miracles.

One of the lessons in today's gospel is that Jesus is willing to help even the least among us. He loves us despite our unwillingness to "see" his divinity. (Lord help my unbelief!) The pharisees missed the whole point. They were so sure of themselves and invested in their own self righteousness that they couldn't concede the miracle as an act of God through his son Jesus. Admitting this would have threatened their positions within their community. The pharisees were so invested in preserving their esteem that they missed an opportunity to fully experience this beautiful act of mercy. The pharisees were simply blinded by their own egos. They had already made up their minds about who Jesus wasn't. Even though they had all the evidence necessary to conclude the authenticity of this miraculous healing they chose to double down on protecting their own theological fiefdoms (i.e., pride).

It remains easy for us to point out the "sins" of others or justifying the denial of giving to others. So many times we are so inwardly focused that we fail to see the opportunities to recognize the miracles that surround us every day or see Christ in others. John describes the restoration of vision through a physical miracle for a poor man. Meanwhile so many of us remain metaphorically blind by the poor choices we make. Instead of spending Lent preparing our hearts and focusing on parts of us that need changing, we choose to turn a blind eye to that which keeps us from experiencing the Joy that comes in fully knowing Him. But Is it our sins that blind us or our blindness to sin that keep us from being in communion with God? In this case perhaps it is not the question that matters. The answer is found in the Lenten process: prayer, fasting, and giving.

by Rodney Van Bibber