

Reflection for the Fourth Sunday of Lent

As was the case last Sunday, we have just listened to a very long gospel passage in a shortened form. This abridged version tries to capture the gist of the longer story. It does a reasonable job but in speaking about today's gospel I also need to draw on the bigger story itself.

Jesus has already declared himself as *"the light of the world"*¹ and the theme of the story is about stepping out of the darkness into the light of Christ. In the miracle recorded in today's gospel Jesus encounters a man who has lived his entire life in darkness because he was born blind and has had to beg to support himself. Jesus opens his eyes to allow light into his life and he opens his heart and mind to the light of the faith. However, Jesus worked this cure of the man born blind on a sabbath day which caused quite a stir because activity on the sabbath was forbidden. This impacts on how the cure is perceived by various groups and upon how they think of Jesus. The long story deals with one group after the other: will they let the light of Jesus into their lives or will they choose to remain in the darkness?

Firstly, we hear about *"his neighbours and people who had earlier seen him begging"*. They are a divided group with some going so far as denying that it is the man born blind at all. *"He only looks like him"* some assert. They don't want to step into the light because they don't want to get involved.

Next, we turn to the Pharisees who assert that Jesus *"cannot be from God: he does not keep the sabbath."* They go on to say, *"we are disciples of Moses: we know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from."* They are happy to stay in the lesser light of the Law of Moses.

Then the parents of the man born blind are sent for. While they recognise he is their son and was definitely born blind, they go on to say *"we do not know how he can see again or who opened his eyes. He is old enough let him speak for himself."* Fear leads them to sit on the fence and prevents them from stepping into the light of Christ.

Finally, the Pharisees interrogate the man born blind himself. He does not hesitate to step into the light and asserts that Jesus is *"a prophet"* and he declares to Jesus: *"Lord, I believe."*

The gospel today challenges us to step out of the darkness and into the light of Christ. In our second reading St Paul writes to the Ephesians *"You were darkness once, but now you are light in the Lord; be like children of light, for the effects of light are seen in complete goodness and right living and truth."*

¹ Jn 8: 12