

Lent: related to the lengthening of days in Spring; the ascent of light over darkness

If you read today's Gospel narrative about the cure of a man born blind, you may not notice, given the extraordinary change wrought in the man who begins to see for the first time in his life - that it's not the miracle that upsets the religious leaders (known as Pharisees) but the fact that Jesus cured the man *on the Sabbath!* Jesus broke the law. Note their reaction as they complain: *This man (Jesus) is not from God, because he does not keep the Sabbath.* According to Jewish Law the Sabbath had to be a day of absolute rest – a holy day of obligation.

Consequently they want to reverse the event, erase such scandalous behavior from the clock. They begin to deny that the cure ever happened: "The man wasn't blind to begin with; it's not the blind beggar that now can see but some other already sighted fellow who looks like him." But they run into opposition from others who confirm that the newly sighted fellow was indeed the man who had been blind from birth – and it did happen, Sabbath or no Sabbath.

Then begins the inquisition. The worry of these Pharisees seems to be: if you change one thing, you may eradicate our whole way of life. Also: this Jesus, by breaking the Sabbath, is a sinner; sinners can't work miracles. The parents are questioned: "Was your son really born blind?" They then ask the man himself: "What did Jesus do? How did he do it?" The young man replies: "How do I know? All I know is that I can see a world I never saw before!" Frustrated, the Pharisees excommunicate the fellow – physically. It says: *they threw him out* – literally.

Just prior to this story the Gospel of John describes Jesus saying: *I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness.* Today's reading serves to illustrate that declaration – and it speaks of more than physical vision. As I look back over the years I can say, metaphorically, that I was born blind – and so were you. What did you know? What did I know? Education helped me see much about myself, my world, about the history of my world. But it was never enough – for the older I get the more I find out things that come as a surprise – as if I were learning to see for the first time – and indeed to see even my past for the first time, as through a rear view mirror. Especially fresh insights regarding the guidance of my life!

But granted that my religious heritage addresses the meaning of our lives in rich and various ways (even as the religion of the Pharisees did), sedimentation also settles in so that an occasional earthquake of insight is *needed* (like the cure of this man born blind) to wake us up to even more of the ever unfolding awareness of who we are and what entices us to want to live forever – beyond such "facts" as death and the myopia of this media driven age.

If you read this Sunday's Gospel simply as proof that Jesus is divine – because he can work miracles – and base your faith in him on that score alone – you need to go wash yourself in the pool of Siloam as Jesus advised the man born blind – and wash away the mud from your eyes. And learn that Jesus is about so much more than just miracles.

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