

Being Led by the Blind

A consistent theme in the annals of salvation history is found in the Scriptures proclaimed today. In both the story of Jesse's sons and the story of the man born blind, we again see that God has repeatedly chosen the least likely to fulfill God's will in the world. The youngest rather than the oldest is anointed, turning the culture's tradition on its head; a blind man, symbol of the broken human condition, is chosen to reveal the light of the world.

One would think that this pattern, so pronounced throughout the Scriptures, would have led us to recognize the power of the humble and the broken in our midst. Yet the world, the church--you and I--often look to the most powerful for leadership, when it is often to the least likely, the improbable, who have what we most need. From the day he was elected the bishop of Rome, the title he prefers, Francis asked us to take our lead from the poor, reminding us of the classic biblical paradox of the least likely being called to lead. He has even pointedly asked bishops to

abandon pomp and ceremony so they can meet their flocks “in the trenches.” But I’m convinced he didn’t only mean bishops!

The story from the Book of Samuel and the story from the Gospel of John challenge the role played by those in authority. Jesus levels one of the harshest indictments to those who hold claim to the religious and political leadership of his time:

*“If you were blind, you would have no sin;
but now you are saying, ‘We see,’ so your sin remains.”*

But we shouldn’t miss the point of what Jesus is saying. ***It is an indictment in which we all have a full share.*** As we move further into this Lenten Season, we understand that we, too, fail to see. We need to seek the sight of the blind, not the sight of those who claim to see. The blind are dependent on others for their safety and welfare. They seek not to be in control, but rather are gratefully reliant on the other. The blind teach us that our own resources are always lacking in some way. We need others. We need to be a community. This may be the silver lining of the Covid 19 pandemic!

It is hard to find a group of people more in tune with this sense of a communal dependence than the communities of Twelve Step spirituality. What we have in those courageous souls who “work the program” is a model of recognizing total dependence on God and a connectedness with a shared weakness, from which they get the strength to live “one day at a time.” What is so remarkable about these men and women who seek their freedom from the darkness of addiction is that they rely not on any one person in authority, but rather on God and the stories of human weakness they freely share. The power of God’s compassion is expressed in every one of their stories. As the stories are shared, they identify with the weakness revealed, and recognize, in the light of God’s compassion, the power of the story to heal their own story.

Our faith should lead us to such a community each Sunday. Our worship defines our reliance on God and on others. Liturgy is literally *liturgia*, "the work of the people." It is a communal act. That journey leads each Sunday to our parish churches where we place our stories in the light of the Word proclaimed. It is the story shared in community

which casts out the shadow of fear and doubt and redirects our lives for the coming week. Today, in the light of closed churches, we should prayerfully share those stories with our families around the dinner table preferably before the meal is served, mirroring the sharing of the Word at the Eucharistic meal. Use the reflection questions following this homily or your own.

Our shared stories reaffirm today's Scripture theme of the least likely being chosen, of the blind who are able to see. God is again calling the least likely to lead the way. Today that just happens to be **YOU!**

Sabbath Reflections for the Fourth Week of Lent

Where is your story in the Sacred Story this week.

In what ways are you blind? How does/can that blindness help you see more clearly?

Do you know someone who uses the Twelve Steps? How do/could those steps help the recovering addict see more clearly?

How could this Covid 19 pandemic help you see more clearly?