

HOMILY 4TH SUN LENT YRA 2017

There is a neurologist who wrote about a man born blind who had his sight surgically restored by and experimental surgery. The man's eyes had to be bandaged for a period of time to allow them heal. The day the bandages were removed he was surrounded by his family and his surgical team. They were hoping to witness the man experiencing great joy when he was able to see for the first time. Instead, the man began to weep. He could see for the first time in his life but he had not developed the neural pathways needed to process the visual images. His eyes worked, but he could not interpret what he saw. He was unable to interpret what he saw over time and the vision was just bright confused madness. He begged the doctors to re-blind him, which they would not do. The only relief that the man could find is in blindfolding himself.

In the Gospel reading today we hear the story about the man born blind who had his physical sight restored and then developed spiritual sight. Most of us here today do not have to develop the neural pathways to interpret what we see, but all of us need to develop spiritual sight. The information is all there for spiritual sight, but we need to be able to interpret it. Is something missing from your life? Maybe it is spiritual sight.

Why was the man born blind to begin with? The people at the time thought they knew. They believed that the man was blind because of his own sin or because of the sin of his parents. We know today that is not true. Because of science we know what causes some illnesses, but there are many illnesses that we do not know what causes them. Sometimes we fall into the mindset they had 2,000 years ago. "God gave me cancer because of something I did in the past." This is not true. With spiritual sight we can learn that God does not cause bad things to happen to us. God loves us unconditionally all the time and he never punishes us. Sometimes we have to suffer the consequences for that sin and sometimes other people have to suffer the consequences of that sin, we have to take responsibility for that. We cannot blame God.

Notice that the man born blind did not ask to have his vision restored. God reached out to him. God wants health and wholeness for us, and that is where it is trying to lead us. However we do need have spiritual sight and cooperate with him. The man born blind could have said: "I am not having spit and mud smeared on my eyes. That is gross and ridiculous and I am not going to do it." But he cooperates and his vision is restored. The Pharisees are not open to Jesus. They do not even accept that the man's vision was restored. All they could see is that Jesus was a threat to their power and to the status quo. Sometimes we are resistant to change as well. Our spiritual sight tells us that God wants what is best for us and we need to trust him. God does not play terrible tricks on us to see if we can figure things out. Sometimes we resist God and want to do things our own way. But if we cooperate with God we will end up in a good place. I talk to people who tell me: "I am not sure what to pray for. What if I am praying for the wrong thing? What will happen then?" God is always moving us to health and wholeness. He does not say: "You have to figure this out on your own. I am not going to help you until you come up with the right prayer request." He always helps us. I think our prayer should be more to give me the spiritual strength to persevere. Help me to see your will in my life. Show me the loving thing to do in this situation. Help me to accept the things that I cannot change. Through these prayerful conversations with God every day we can gain the spiritual insight to discern what we need to do each day as things unfold.

The man who had his vision surgically restored was never able to interpret the visual images. But the man born blind in the Gospel was able to interpret the visual images as well as develop spiritual sight. He was able to find meaning in what happened to him. At first he has no idea who Jesus is or how he had his vision restored. He says: All I know is that I used to be blind and now I can see. He repeats this over and over again. But when he interacts with Jesus

several times he gains spiritual sight. He moves from seeing him as a man, to seeing a prophet, to seeing the Son of Man. Without spiritual sight our lives can seem hostile, difficult and chaotic and tragic. The more we develop our spiritual sight the more we can find meaning in our lives. Life is hard and all kinds of challenging things happen. With spiritual sight we can find the deeper meaning. Everything that happens in our lives has meaning. Our challenges always make us stronger and wiser people. Our struggles make us more compassionate. If we struggle and make it through to the other side, we can always help people who are similarly situated. If you are struggling aren't you really happy to find someone who has already gone through what you are going through? God brings goodness from everything that happens in our lives, but sometimes we need spiritual vision to see the goodness. If you want to find God in your life, look for the goodness. That is where you will find him. Is something missing in your life? Maybe it is spiritual vision.