

Father of Light, from whom every good gift comes, send your Spirit into our hearts with the rushing wind of Pentecost, with the same fire that warmed the original disciples, with the Easter light which brightens even the darkest crevices of our minds and hearts.

Let your light shine on our interior selves, to illumine what is dark,
to heal what is broken, to free what is trapped, to warm that which has grown cold.
Let your good Spirit guide us in the path of your Word.

Let us never shirk from the Good News of Jesus,
but let us instead shun all that would blind us to you,
all that would have us reject your love, and all that would limit your Spirit.

Let your Church be our support, our strength, our mother, in our endeavour
to live the Gospel and to bring its light to all the world, as Jesus commanded. Amen.

Spi - rit of God, come dwell with - in me.
 Op - en my heart. O come set me
 free. Fill me with love for Je - sus, my Lord, O fill me with liv - ing wa - ter.
 Je - sus is liv - - ing, Je - sus is
 here. Je - sus, my Lord, come clo - ser to me. Je - sus, our Sa - viour,
 dy - ing for me, and ris - ing to save his peo - ple.

Lord, I am blind. O Lord, I can't see!
Stretch out your hand, O Lord, comfort me.
Lead me your way in truth and in light, O fill me with living water.
Jesus is living, Jesus is here. Jesus, my Lord, come closer to me.
Jesus, our Saviour, dying for me, and rising to save his people



*Jesus Christ is
the Light of the World*
Session Fourteen 2016-17

Connecting to where we are as a people
journeying through the paschal Season

The first in a Lenten “trilogy” of lengthy “Johanne” Gospel episodes was proclaimed at Mass last Sunday, under the broad theme of

conversion — transformation.

It was essential for the fulfilment of the mission of Jesus as “saviour of the world” that he encounter the Samaritans and proclaim the Gospel to them. John 4 was our detailed exploration of this necessary aspect of Jesus’ “work”: it began in an encounter with an individual, a woman of Samaria at the Jacob’s Well in the town of Sychar. It ended with the Samaritans coming towards Jesus (their white garments indicating Christ’s harvest of evangelisation – c.f. v36), their inviting him to “stay with them” (another common Gospel desire), and their receiving of the gift of faith.

As the **Preface to the Eucharistic Prayer** last Sunday put it:

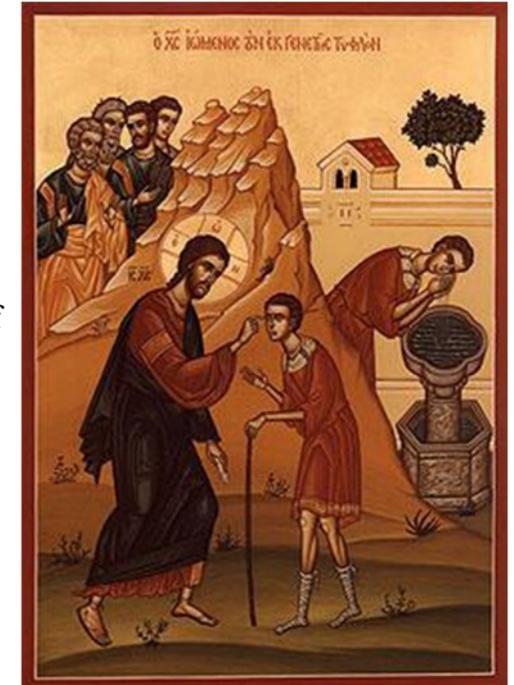
*When he asked the Samaritan woman for water to drink,
he had already created the gift of faith within her,
and so ardently did he thirst for her faith,
that he kindled in her the fire of divine love.*

From that encounter we were given a starting point to consider our own journey of conversion–transformation, our thirst and the living water offered by Jesus.

This Sunday the Church proclaims the second episode in the trilogy:

Geographically, (and in the unfolding of the Gospel revelation) we have moved on; we are now back in Jerusalem, Jesus being there for the Feast of Tabernacles, a Jewish festival which commemorates the provision of food and water God gave the Israelites in their journey through the wilderness, along with a thanksgiving for the harvest, and prayer for rain for the crops in the coming year and also a feast of expectation of the Lord’s deliverance. It is an eight day festival.

[Note: While the synoptic Gospels only really speak of Jesus being in Jerusalem as an adult once, for the passover toward the end of his life (though the evangelist Luke mentions that when Jesus was young he went every year with his parents for passover), John records Jesus being present in the holy city at least four times for Jewish feasts. Further, he gives new significance to these Jewish festivals by his presence. He is, of course, for John, the New Temple! In Jerusalem for this feast of Tabernacles, he proclaims himself to be both “living water” 7:38) and “light of the world” (8:12).]



Anticipating this Sunday, the Fourth of Lent:

The story of the man born blind, proclaimed this Sunday, is from that part of John known as the **Book of Signs**, and this incident constitutes one of the **seven** major signs given by Jesus.

The themes of blindness/sight and darkness/light are motifs John uses to express our journey to faith in Christ. As last week with the Samaritan woman, this man who encounters Jesus (seemingly by chance) is taken on a journey from the everyday experiences of life (begging, going to the well for water, etc) to a new life where he becomes a living sign of the Gospel enfleshed in Christ, just as the woman of last week became an evangeliser to her community.

Remember the **Lenten** context of our reading of this text, because we are a **liturgical** as well as a **biblical** people. The Church places this story especially before those who are preparing to become full members of the church at Easter, that they may place themselves in the path of Jesus and encounter him as Lord of their lives.

Note the two basic facets of the text:

- a man, blind from birth, is miraculously healed on the sabbath day;
- the consequences of this healing - for the man himself, and among the witnesses/those who hear about the event.

Perhaps.....if this story were told in the synoptic Gospels this could well have been where it ended! But we are in the Gospel of John.....so.....we must reflect!

That part of Jesus ministry is concerned with “healing” is very obvious from many Gospel stories. But what more can we learn from John’s Gospel and this incident (which has been described “*as sheer drama, one of the brilliant passages in the gospel, rich in the tragic irony of which the evangelist is master*”) in particular? It teaches us that Jesus comes not just to cure because “health is good” (fine as that would be); rather Jesus has a much broader agenda.

His mission is to do with the opening of lives, the curing of pasts, the healing of memories, the renewal of religion and the consequent growing that can happen in people. In religious terms we call this “conversion”. St. John in particular throughout his Gospel “lights up” the situation between those who follow Jesus and those (the inwardly blind) who “will” not see him for who he is. It is their stubbornness of heart, their clinging to the past, their love of power, rather than their openness to the “ever new” light of God which characterises them. Through the meticulous detail accorded to this lengthy episode by the evangelist, we can see that John wants to take us more deeply into some of his principal motifs for understanding the life Jesus comes to bring “*in abundance*” 10:10. [Remember his purpose in writing which we noted last week: “*that you may believe*” (20:30)] These motifs are: sin, sight, blindness, judgement. Indeed, the whole scenario is an illustration of Jesus’ answer to a (seemingly) simple question: *Who sinned?* Remember the general attitude in primitive cultures of attributing a moral cause (often punishment from God) to physical evil/ natural disasters etc.... **Jesus breaks with that tendency.**

The story starts and ends with the references to sin and sinning, but whose sin?.....read 9: 1-3 then 39-41!



GO AND WASH



IN THE POOL OF SILOAM

Gospel. Jesus is completing creation in the “**work**” he is “**sent**” to do”. He is working on the sabbath day! The pool is called “Siloam”, and is so called because it contained the conduit through which the water for the city was “sent”. But truly, Jesus is the one “sent”, he is “**The Envoy**”, a favourite name of John for Jesus.

The effects of the healing on this poor blind man are such that they make him a new creation!

He now speaks, whereas he had been silent before; he is confident, he debates, he recognises, he theologises, and eventually he worships.

That he is now excluded, “driven away” by the Pharisees (v.34) is of no consequence, because he has been sought out by Jesus who “looks for him” and gives him the

opportunity to declare his faith.

(The more you know Jesus, the greater he becomes for you – man, prophet, son of man, divine one.)

St John Chrysostom:

“The Jews cast him out of the temple; the Lord of the temple found him!”

Note the parents’ reaction earlier: “He is an adult”.... scared of the authorities who had power to excommunicate.

By the end of the chapter, the authorities, the Pharisees, have not advanced at all; they are still locked up in their own notions of goodness and correctness: someone has broken the sabbath, someone is blind, there must be a sin, all this cannot be from God.....

The inclusion of the man by Jesus, leads to exclusion by the Pharisees. The sin, the blindness is theirs, the judgement is the Lord’s.

Jesus heals the man, unsolicited, for it is part of the “work” of God he must do.

“Work” was also a motif in the bringing of the Samaritan woman to faith: c.f. 4:34-38.

The healing takes place within a **ritual** of two parts: making of a paste from clay and bathing in purifying waters. In this, the work of creation is taking place. Remember John’s connection with Genesis at the beginning of the Prologue in his

Gospel. Jesus is completing creation in the “**work**” he is “**sent**” to do”. He is working on the sabbath day! The pool is called “Siloam”, and is so called because it contained the conduit through which the water for the city was “sent”. But truly, Jesus is the one “sent”, he is “**The Envoy**”, a favourite name of John for Jesus.

Prayer and Response to the event of the healing of the blind man

Ephesians 5:18-14: *You were darkness once, but now you are light in the Lord.*

In the darkness that would cloud our judgement,

O gentle Jesus, be our Light.

In the darkness that would overtake our dreams,

O gentle Jesus, be our Light.

In the darkness that would hold us bound in fear,

O gentle Jesus, be our Light.

In the darkness that keeps us hostage to our past failures and regrets

O gentle Jesus, be our Light.

In the darkness that would pervade our imaginations,

O gentle Jesus, be our Light.

When we are blind to all that is good and blessed around us,

O gentle Jesus, be our Light.

When we are blind to the presence of your truth,

O gentle Jesus, be our Light.

When we are blind to the beauty of your creation and your love,

O gentle Jesus, be our Light.

When we are blind to our chosenness as your people,

O gentle Jesus, be our Light.