

A fourth grade teacher in Passaic, New Jersey, was a little apprehensive when she introduced herself to her class on the first day of the new school year. One of her students was completely blind. How would he cope? she wondered. How would the other students treat him? Since the young boy was comfortable with himself and the challenges that were his, the teacher was soon at ease. Nevertheless, she wanted the other students to know and experience, “firsthand”, as it were, the manner in which their fellow classmate *saw* the world.

To that end, she passed out blindfolds to all the sighted students and for an entire school day, they made their way through their classes, through lunch and recess and through their study periods, sharing all the while in the darkness that enveloped their blind classmate. Occasionally he offered them advice, thus enabling them to begin to adapt, as he had, to a world without light.

In a sense, the blind man, featured in today’s Gospel, offers us a similar experience. He invites us to accept a blindfold so as to enter his world. He invites us to listen to him as he willingly leads us by the hand from the darkness into the light of sight and faith in Jesus.

In the mirror of today’s Gospel, where do we see ourselves? To John, all of us are born blind, that is, without knowing our true identity and direction in Jesus Christ. We stumble along, groping in the darkness of our own futile wisdom and plans, until we are found by the healing grace of Christ. For the blind man in the story, his new sight leads him into insight about the identity of Jesus. At first this man had no idea of who Jesus was. When the Pharisees question him, he says, the **man** named Jesus gave me my sight. Later, he is pressed further. Now he admits that Jesus is a **prophet**. Then, after being thrown out of the synagogue, he encounters Jesus again. The Lord is waiting for him. “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” He responds, Sir, tell me who He is so that I may believe.” Christ tells him, “I am he.” And the man believes, no longer calling him, “sir” but Lord.

But in the religious leaders of the synagogue, the story is reversed. They plunge deeper and deeper into darkness and unbelief. The blind man’s faith and insight stand in ironic contrast to their complete lack of faith. They had eyes, but did not see. They had the law, the prophets and the scriptures but did not hear or heed its message; they were, by all accounts, the holy ones, but they did not believe.

We have past the midway point of our Lenten journey. So where are you; how is it going? What blindfolds are you wearing? Where is their darkness in your life? We can all too easily become accustomed to the dark. But the man born blind is a sign of hope for all of us. Where is Jesus calling you to light and life, sight and insight?

[Story of Blind Bartemeus: didn't want to see the poor, the hungry,

becomes blind. What do you want? I want to see!

Do you want to see me?

I do want to see!

The season of Lent invites us to drop our carefully crafted blindfolds, to come squinting and rejoicing into the Light of Christ. We are called and sent to live as children of the Light. We are called and sent to see.