

Seeing With Our Hearts, Not Our Eyes

Intro. The disciples' response to the man born blind – besides not *seeing* the man - was to ask whose fault it was, who sinned. That was the common understanding of diseases and poverty and misfortune. Not much different from today. Every new virus from Ebola to AIDS to Coronavirus is blamed by some people as God's wrath on sinners. It is easy to believe that, as long as *none of our family or friends gets sick*. We become blind that they are our sisters and brothers.

I. For most people, the man born blind was more of an object to be pitied rather than a human being with feelings and intelligence. When we meet him, he is dependent on the kindness of strangers for his life. After dispelling the disciples' false assumptions, the

Lord initiated a relationship with the man [M. McGlory, *NCR*]. Unlike other healings, the man didn't ask to see. The Lord just did it and walked away. The man didn't see who did it. Each time the man had to explain it he saw more clearly what happened. He became more confident. The Pharisees though they tried, could not intimidate him. He ended up teaching them that one who could restore sight couldn't be a sinner and must be from God. They refused to see the miracle and he was excommunicated from the synagogue. The Lord found him and gave him a chance to see him and believe in him. He saw clearly for the first time in his life. And he saw Jesus.

Concl. At times we *make* ourselves blind. Usually it's when we don't want to believe something so we ignore it or the person. For a long time we didn't want to believe the virus would come to our backyards. It was far across the ocean; we were safe. Now we see it as dangerous to ourselves and everyone else. We who once thought we were independent and needed no one, now must depend on each other for our life and stop the spread of the virus. That is why our church and our government are taking extraordinary actions to break the chain of infection. We must work together as we have in previous pandemics. Look in on our neighbors, carefully of course. If shopping, pick up a few extra things for the food pantry or school lunches. A previous bishop of this diocese used to assign brand new priests to teach religion at Bishop Kenny High

School. He believed that teaching uninterested high school kids – like me – would help the new priests put together the theology and scripture they learned in seminary by explaining to others. It was unfair to do that with the Irish priests who had no idea about American culture or kids. Maybe the more we talk about God and through our prayer, we can see him more clearly as the man born blind did. Please be safe and pray for our community and world.

Fr. Michael Pendergraft

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