

My dear people of God, the Gospel reading focuses on Jesus as **the light of the world** that overcomes darkness. Christ is the light of every Christian, and away from Christ, we will find ourselves in darkness, sin, unhappiness and death. Those who believe in Christ walk in the light –their lives have meaning and direction. Those who do not believe stumble in the darkness of confusion, as we see in the healing of the man born blind. In today's Gospel, Jesus, the Light of the World, brings light to a man born blind. We are all suffering from spiritual blindness like the man. We receive the light of faith through our baptism, and the faith has rendered us able to see, and by stages, to come more fully into the light. The man, in today's Gospel, goes through the stages of the Christian walk: out of darkness, and into the beautiful light of Christ. Let's take a moment and reflect on the readings.

The disciples questioned Jesus "Rabbi, who sinned... that this man was born blind (Jn.9:2)? This question echoes general Jewish views on the causes of illness and of misfortunes in general: they regarded them as punishment for personal sins (cf. Job 4:7-8; 2Mac.7:18), or as the sins of the parents being visited on their children (Tob.3:3). While the disciples want to dwell on this opinion, Jesus avoids these concerns and focuses on solutions. The fact is that the man is blind; assessing blame for his condition is unproductive. Healing the man is uppermost in Jesus' mind, so that **the works of God will be made manifest** in a blind man. Having said this, Jesus, the Light of the World, begins the work of healing him. He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva, and smeared the clay on his eyes, and said to him, "Go wash in the Pool of Siloam." So he went and washed, and came back able to see (Jn.9:6-7).

In the John 9:6-7, the cure of the man is done in two stages—Jesus' action on the eyes of the blind man, and the man being told to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. John using the broader etymology of the word "**Siloam**" applies it to Jesus who is the "**one sent**" by the Father. Siloam, a name that means "sent." Jesus worked through the medium of matter to produce effects, which exceed anything matter can do.

Now, the story has reached its climax, and the blind man is challenged to say something about Jesus; he moves beyond calling him "the man called Jesus" and describes Jesus as "**a prophet**." He has gained some insight here. A prophet speaks for God; now, he goes even further and sees him as "**from God**." The man is progressing from **sight to insight**. His ability to see, given to him in Baptism, is now resulting in even clearer vision. This then leads us to the final conclusion of both this gospel and this man's journey. **The man has been thrown out of the synagogue (Jn.9:34)**, as many early Christians were. When Jesus Christ heard about the man having been thrown out of the Synagogue, Jesus did not only receives him, but also **helps him to make an act of faith in His divinity**.

The climax of the Gospel occurs when Jesus finds the man and says, "**Do you believe in the Son of Man**" (Jn.9:35)? He answered and said, "Who is he, sir that I may believe in him?" Jesus said to him, "You have seen him; the one speaking with you is he." He said, "I do believe, Lord," and he worshiped him (Jn.9:38). Now the man's vision is clear. He sees not only Jesus, but also *who* Jesus is. At first, he saw him only as "**the man called Jesus,**" **next as a prophet, and then as "from God."** This final stage is the best of all. He actually sees Jesus and falls down to worship Him; Jesus is not only *from* God, he *is* God. The fact is that, whereas the blind man can see, pride prevented the Pharisees to see Christ.

In conclusion, dear friends, the Gospel has made it abundantly clear that God loves us so much that is why He sent Jesus to save us. Lent invites us to be aware of how sin separates us from God. Return is possible through Christ, who was lifted up on the cross. Let us turn away from our sins and come back to Christ. Let us use this period of grace to amend our lives and walk in God's direction so that our Lenten observances of prayer, fasting and almsgiving may be acceptable to God. Let us pray in this mass for grace to overcome pride and spiritual blindness. Let us humble ourselves so that Jesus the **light of the world** will purify and enlighten our way into the way of peace. Amen!