

My dear people of God, the Gospel reading focuses on Jesus as **the light of the world** that overcomes darkness. Those who believe in him walk in the light – their lives have meaning and direction. Those who do not believe stumble in the darkness of confusion, just as the blind man did prior to his healing. In today's Gospel, Jesus, the Light of the World, brings light to a man born blind. This miracle shows that we are all suffering from spiritual blindness like the man born blind in the Gospel. 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 first reading contains two baptismal elements; namely: God's free choice of the youngest son of Jesse and David's anointing (1Sm.16:12-13). At baptism, the anointing with chrism brings out our royal dignity, as adopted children of God. I, therefore, wish to encourage the catechumens at this stage of their life with a call to follow Christ the light of the world. In the Gospel, 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 (9:6-7).

In John 9:6-7, the man's cure occurs 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 man is challenged to say something about Jesus. The man has gained insight so that 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 the man goes even further and sees him as "**from God**." The man is progressing from **sight to insight**. His ability to see, given to him by Jesus, 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. Our Lord not only receives him, but helps him make an act of faith in his divinity (Jn.9:38).

Finally, dear friends, the text says, *when Jesus heard that they had thrown him out he found him and said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man" (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 (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 from seeing Christ- the light of the world. Through this reading, the church is guiding all Christians and catechumens from darkness of sin into the splendor of God; from imperfection to the perfect knowledge of God. Let us move from 'too know' attitude of the Pharisees into humility so that we can see God. Let us humble ourselves so that Jesus **the light of the world** will purify and enlighten our way into the way of peace. Amen!