

TRINITY NEWS

Lent IV Restoration and a New Vision John 9:1-38

“As he was walking along, he saw a man blind from birth.” Jesus’ immediate reaction and how he knows that the man was blind from birth are not mentioned. But an acute alertness is implicit in this brief observation. Jesus’ disciples also noticed the blind one. They immediately looked for the cause: “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Physical defects were ostracised in Israel. A maimed person was not considered whole. Illness was sought to be a sign of divine disfavour and therefore a part of the murky world of evil. Jesus rejects such a facile interpretation: “Neither this man, nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so the works of God might be revealed in him.” This is not only a refutation of a currently held view of the derivation of illness. It also opens the way to see a symbolic cause of an illness.

Those who have endured extreme illness and lived to recount their experiences know that the world is never the same again. Some people withdraw from the life of faith and the Church when they suffer illness or lose beloved people in unexplainable circumstances. Others step into the scene at Calvary and emerge with a new vision. The words that follow have an urgency about them: “We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” (9:4-5). The themes of light and darkness here are like the crossfires of searchlights piercing darkness in a night bombing raid.

The man born blind has not known the tinted grace of yellow flowers, or the stunning beauty of a dolphin catapulting above foaming waves in a green-blue ocean. But the blindness is not just in the sightless one. Where the light of the Messiah shines, some are dazzled into belief and others are blinded by the light. Christ knows that the sands of time are running out for him. The negatives are piling up before him like a hill on which three crosses will be erected. The eternal darkness is creeping in and his perception of it drives his urgency.

It does not matter to Jesus that it is the Sabbath day, though he observes such days. True compassion has no timetable. Night snuffs out light except for the Messiah, for he is the light in the darkness. But he has to face the darkness in the soul of humanity. He also has to face spiritual blindness, a blindness of soul. Such blindness covers up even the collective unconscious within us like a cross covered in Lent.

When light and darkness clash, especially spiritual light and spiritual darkness, then confusion reigns. That is, until light spills into the darkness and reduces its space in the soul and society. Soul and society are linked together in being human.

The man with restored sight gives voice to issues wider than his thoughts: "If this man were not from God. He could do nothing." And, "Lord, I believe." One comment recognises the source of his healing in a person sent from God. The second is an affirmation of belief that sets him securely on the path of faith. I always rejoice when someone says "I believe" with the vision of Christ before them. Beliefs are convictions, and convictions describe our dreams and our destinies.

Epilogue: Spiritual blindness is like falling into a dark hole in space. Christopher Hitchens, who has strongly attacked Christianity and led the march of atheism, now finds himself being relieved of cancer stress through procedures pioneered by Dr Patrick Collins, former head of the Human Genome project and an evangelical Christian. They have become friends instead of adversaries.

This extended healing in the New Testament tells us about Jesus and the blind man, but most of all it tells us about ourselves and our deep needs that keep coming to the surface, despite our vain attempts to cover them. Let them come and translate them into faith!

Bishop Arthur Jones

To plan:

April 5, Tuesday.

- Bible Study, 10am
- Lenten Study, 7:15pm ((#3 Sta. Potenciana St., Urdaneta Village)

April 7, Thursday.

- Midweek Eucharist, 10am, Chapel

Next week's readings:

Ezekiel 37:1-3,11-14 ; Psalm 130;

Romans 6:16-23;

John 11:17-44