

From The Pastor

A wintery winter it was it was...and still is. Pretty though it is, and much to the delight of skiers and snow enthusiasts, this snowy winter has salt in slim supply and plow budgets straining. The frequent snows and salting has put our budget in a strain as well. Let me please encourage you to use the Winter Expense envelope in your monthly packet. Our plowing expense and salting are way over budget and your help is needed. If everyone does their part, we can move forward without too much damage. Thank you for your generous support in the past and a timely response to this present need.

I am quite aware, as we all are, of the current economic strain. It is a reality that cannot be ignored. Please do what you can to assist in these matters, including a generous prayer to the Lord for a renter for our school. Some have mentioned or complained about so many recent extra collections. Beyond our parish commitment to St. Vincent DePaul, all other extra collections are national or international efforts through the Church to aid various causes. Envelopes are made available for those who wish to support these causes. Ideally, we would all like to be generous to each appeal. I know that is not always possible. If you wish to give and are able to do so, please do so. If you are not able give, simply decline the envelope. Your faithful stewardship to the parish and the CSA is a local commitment that immediately helps us to remain financially viable. Other additional collections are good opportunities to serve the wider Church if you are able. Thank you for your sacrifice and generous giving, and do say a prayer that the Lord bless us with a viable renter.

Last Sunday we pondered the slow, yet powerful conversion of the woman at the well. Finally perceiving the thirst of her soul, the woman turns to Jesus who understands and forgives all her previous attempts at real love. Seeing the truth of God in Jesus and accepting his word of testimony, she drinks deeply from the living water Jesus offers: eternal life.

This week, the theme is the same: awakening to faith and seeing Jesus as the One sent by God as Savior and Christ. Continuing in John's gospel, we have to be attentive to the symbolism he uses to challenge us to see below the surface to see the reality of our spiritual truth.

The story of the man born blind is a universal view of all people. Not only a personal story for this one individual, the blind man represents the condition of all humanity that Jesus has come to heal and enlighten. Like the woman at the well, the blind man does not realize full conversion all at once. First, he is blest with physical healing of his eyes. Only later, through the challenges and interactions of those who resist God in Jesus does the man mature into full-blown faith and action.

This is both a personal story meant to affect us personally, but also a theological story giving insight into the truth and reality of God. Creation is a work in progress; God is present and active in the world today to bring us to full spiritual maturity through Jesus. Symbolism of creation is seen in the clay that Jesus spits upon, and smears on the man's eyes. Both clay and spit are creative elements. Jesus works to bring forward God's creative work to full spiritual maturity. Healing the eyes, first physically, is only a short step to giving sight to the inner soul of the man. This is the progress and the conversion that will be realized in the man born blind who receives physical sight, and then full spiritual sight in professing faith in Jesus as the Son of Man.

The conversion of the man is contrasted by the blindness of the Pharisees who refuse to see the truth of God in Jesus. It is a case of the blind leading the blind. The Pharisees presume to know the fullness of God. God is a lawgiver, and any lawbreaker is not of God. Jesus breaks the law of the Sabbath so he is a sinner, and cannot be of God. So goes their thinking. No matter what the physical evidence is, so clear and obvious in the blind man who now sees, they refuse to see the action of God in and through Jesus.

The story characterizes the human condition. For those who live by law and sin, that same law meant for freedom will become their judge. Those who see and accept the light of God in Jesus will find eternal life. The Pharisees become their own judge by clinging to the demands of the law

alone, refusing to see the truth and life in Jesus. Jesus does not accept the thinking presented by his own disciples. 'Lord, who sinned, this man or his parents that he should be born blind?' Neither, Jesus says, it is for the glory of God. Jesus uses the blindness of the man, all humanity, to reveal the work and gift of God that is possible for those who accept it. The Pharisees remain blind only because they insist that they in fact see. This is not the case.

The story is a call to faith. Have we allowed our eyes to be open to the truth of God in Jesus? Full spiritual conversion never happens all at once. It comes in stages through life experience. Ours is a continuing walk with Jesus to see more and more fully all that he is, and all that it is which he offers us. Living within, yet beyond the law, we are called to be people of the Spirit who see and accept Jesus, who is the light of life. Lord Jesus, continue to open our eyes more fully.

Father John Esper