

Light for Greater Sight Fourth Sunday of Lent March 30, 2014 9:00 AM
1 Sm 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a; Eph 5:8-14; **Jn 9:1-41** (There is great beauty in the creation and there is great beauty in every one of us that does not appear on the surface and cannot be seen by the eye, but is there.)

We are on these Sundays of Lent walking through the Book of Signs, the first part of the Gospel of John. **The Book of Signs is about specific symbols that speak of God's redeeming, reforming, renewing power.** Blindness is, after all, a very powerful symbol. **There are different kinds of sight and there are different kinds of blindness.**

A friend of mine was blind for many years. In spite of this, he ran a business here in Addison and he also owned two farms in Wisconsin, which he visited frequently. After he died, I asked his widow whether she would be going up to the farms very soon, north of Madison. She said, "Well no, I don't know how to get there." And I said, "But you have driven there for years. She said, "I know, but **Karl** always told me what road to take and when to turn." I said, "But Karl was blind!" And she said, "Yes, I know, but he always knew where he was and where he wanted to go." I can't say that of myself! It's a different kind of seeing. **It was the peculiar kind of imagination he had to know where he was and how to get where he wanted to go.**

Several years ago a new technique was developed: laser surgery that was used to bring sight to those children who were born blind, a first in the medical field. The first subjects of this new surgery were all in their teens. There were several of them, six or seven, I think. What was quite shocking to the doctors and nurses and the parents was the reaction of the children once they could see. They expected that they would be delighted and elated, but they weren't. Most of them were disappointed, and some were actually depressed. They wondered why. So they questioned them. The children said, first of all, that they thought the world would be more beautiful than it really is. **They saw the world in their imagination when they were sightless.** And two of them, I believe, were extremely disappointed in the way they looked in the mirror. **They imagined themselves being far more, comely, beautiful, handsome.**

Now that tells us something about **the power of human imagination.** The question is: Were these children really deceived? I don't believe so. **I think they actually saw the truth. There is great beauty in the creation and there is great beauty in every one of us that does not appear on the surface and cannot be seen by the eye, but is there.** These young people really did see something that was real.

I think the meaning of this story in the gospel can be enlightened by the young people who were blind at birth, who gained their sight, and by Karl, who had this unusual ability to see even though he was blind. There are many people in the world who have fully functional eyes and yet are oblivious to the beauty that the children, blind at birth, saw clearly. Indeed, probably many people are blind to beauty, goodness, and truth, especially, sad to say, adults. Children can see with their pure, unsullied imaginations what becomes opaque for adults.

The importance of this story is that **no one need remain lost in darkness**. God can give sight, and, in fact, Jesus' mission is to give sight to the blind, as well as hearing for the deaf and motion to the paralyzed. **And you can understand sight, hearing, and motion in many different ways**. There are ways people are paralyzed by fear, for example. They can walk, but they don't move. They can hear, but they don't listen, and so on. **God is at work making us more able to hear, to see, to move**. It is another story of **rebirth**, if you will. It is a story of **redemption**. It is a story of **salvation**, whatever you want to call it. And it is for all those whose vision is dark, whose lives are dim and dismal. But also it's for all those who are very comfortable, but who don't see the struggles and the hardship that many in this world suffer. The point is seeing and **seeing beyond oneself**. That is essential if we are to embrace others. If we are to do the work of Christ, we have to go beyond where we are, what we normally see, what we think is sight. **We have to see the great goodness that God has created for all of us, and the great suffering Jesus came to redeem**.

There are many things that can hold us back from actually seeing the wonders of God. **Negative experiences can blind us to goodness and make us callous toward other people's pain**. But **salvation means nothing can stand in the way of God**. One of our young adults preparing for Confirmation working with the guests at PADS was so surprised to find among them so much positive energy and gratitude in spite of their many hardships. **Light can shine anywhere at any time in the most unexpected places and at the most unexpected times**. The story of the man born blind means **no one is hopeless**. God is leading us all to greater and greater vision of his purpose and love in the world.