

In the Gospel reading for Sunday, we have the encounter between Jesus and the man born blind. This encounter challenges us to look at reality with God's eyes rather than human ones.

In the Gospel Jesus cures a man born blind. The man receives physical sight, but also much more. I don't think it would be right to say that the man is given faith because he already has faith. What he is given is the ability to see Jesus as the one for whom he and the entire people have been waiting – the Messiah.

In contrast to the man born blind, the Pharisees are unable to see. First, they don't believe the cure could have been done by a man of God, since it was done on the Sabbath. They question the man, but don't really listen to him. Next, they don't believe that he was really *born* blind, so they ask the man's parents. They don't like the answer that he *was* born blind, and so they go to the man again. They talk to him, and after he asks them if their questioning is a desire to be Jesus' disciples, they get angry, and when he shares his faith, they say, "You were born totally in sin, and are you trying to teach us?" Then they throw the man out of the synagogue.

The Pharisees remind me of a boss who asks you to explain what happened when something goes wrong. You tell them the truth as you know it, but they don't accept it because your answer is not the one they are looking for. No matter how many times or how many ways you answer the questions, they're looking for something other than the truth you tell them. The Pharisees deny that they need to see.

Are there times when we deny the need to see? What do we have trouble seeing? Here are some possibilities. We may have trouble seeing:

- That our suffering is *not* God's punishment – Very often, when we are hurting, we ask why God is punishing us. We may have trouble seeing that God is indeed with us at those times, but the Cross of Jesus assures us that God is indeed with us in our suffering. There may be times when God allows us to suffer the consequences of our actions, but I don't think that is the same as punishment.
- That sometimes our justifications are simply rationalizations – There are times, if we're honest with ourselves, that we try to justify doing something we know isn't right, or at least is questionable. At those times, it can be helpful to examine our motives and talk it out with someone else.
- That we, and others, are children of God – There are times when we look with suspicion on those who are different from us, along the lines of race or culture or background or age or faith or whatever. But if we are willing to listen to them, we often see that they have something to teach us about ourselves that we need to learn. I remember being with a person at some talk, who remarked to me that he did not want to be "color-blind" when it came to race. I have come to understand that, because being "color-blind" can mean that I ignore a person's history or situation, and try to make them be like me.

At the same time, while it's good to explore and learn from differences, it is also important to recognize that there are many similarities among us. Many of us yearn for the same things – well-being, a purpose to our life, food and shelter and clothing.

If we believe that God created the universe and all that is in it, we are called to see each other as children of God, like ourselves. Jesus died and rose again for us and for the whole world. How others respond to God's love may be a different story, but God does love us all.

- That creation is sacred – Since the universe has been created by God, then all creation is gift, and all creation is sacred. The world is not meant to be used up by us.
- That what is comfortable is not always right – It can be comfortable to stay where we are spiritually. We can be like the Pharisees and figure that we don't need to learn any more about our faith, or that we

don't need to deepen our relationship with God. But Jesus is always calling us to come closer to Himself, and follow Him more faithfully. The status quo is not the kingdom of God, and we are called to help build up the kingdom, even when it entails taking up our cross, or going where we've never dared to before.

In our first reading from 1 Samuel, God reminds the prophet that "Not as man sees does God see." In those areas where we have trouble seeing, we need to acknowledge our blindness. And when we do, we will be given our sight, and the grace to follow Jesus.

May God continue to bless us all, and may we see as God sees.

In Christ,

Fr. Phil, CP