

Homily for Fourth Sunday of Lent (22 March 2020)

Blind Spots and Spiritual Healing

A) Introduction:

Physiologically, the “blind-spot” is the part of our eye where vision is not experienced. It is the spot where the optic nerve enters the eyeball. A blind spot in a vehicle is an area around the vehicle that cannot be directly observed by the driver

While driving head check is very important. A good driver always will scan the blind spots before taking any deviation or the change of line. In everyone’s life there are blind spots. Scanning through the blind spots does not mean U-Turn , nor reversing. Rather it helps one to have a glance of the past or the hidden aspects of one’s life. We can call it as spiritual blindness. ***“God does not see as man sees... man sees the appearances, but the Lord looks at the heart.” I Samuel 16:7***

Today’s readings both remind us that it is God who gives us proper vision in body as well as in soul and instruct us that we should be constantly on our guard against spiritual blindness.

B) Anecdotes:

1) ***“Amazing Grace”*** is the story of the healing of one person’s personal as well as cultural blindness. John Newton was born in 1740 in England. He grew up in the Anglican Church. As a little boy he went to Church and learned Bible lessons. His mother died when he was only eleven, and so he travelled with his father who was the captain and owner of a cargo ship. The “cargo” was two to three hundred black slaves packed, lying next to each other, in the ship’s hold. In a storm, little John Newton was washed overboard and was picked up on the open seas by a slave trader who trained John in his trade as he grew up. Before his conversion, Newton’s life had become so debauched, irreverent, and immoral that even his fellow sailors were shocked by his conduct and coarse speech. On one return voyage to England, Newton was caught in such a fierce storm that all aboard despaired of life.

The Scriptures John had once learned at his mother’s knee returned to his mind, and he began to hope that Jesus could deliver him, dreadful sinner though he was. For the first time in years, John sought the Lord in prayer, and as he later wrote, “the Lord sent from on high and delivered me out of deep waters.” It was on March 21, a date he remembered yearly for the rest of his life, that Newton began to realize the enormity of the evil in his life and his complicity with the evil of slavery in his slave-trading. He left the ship, joined the seminary, was ordained and became a zealous pastor. Thanking God for the grace of conversion, he composed a song which is now one of ’ favourite hymns: ***“Amazing Grace how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see.”*** Jesus always comes to heal people who are spiritually blind if they ask for help. Newton, like his culture, had a huge personal blind-spot — tolerance for slave-trading. And Jesus healed John Newton’s spiritual blindness

2) *"This much I know of Christ."* The book *God's Annoying Love for Imperfect People* by Michael Yaconeli tells the story of a man recently converted to Jesus and how an unbelieving friend sought to "see" why. "So, you have been converted to Christ?" "Yes." "Then you must know a great deal about Him. Tell me, what country was he born in?" "I don't know." "What was his age when he died?" "I don't know." "How many sermons did he preach?" "I don't know." "You certainly know very little for a man who claims to be converted to Christ." "You are right. I am ashamed at how little I know about him. But this much I know: Three years ago, I was a drunkard. I was in debt. My family was falling to pieces; they dreaded the sight of me. But now I have given up drink. We are out of debt. Ours is a happy home. My children eagerly await my return home each evening. All this Christ has done for me. This much I know of Christ." Does it not sound like the answers given by the blind man healed by Jesus?

According to Pope Benedict XVI, the miracle of the healing of the blind man is a sign that Christ wants not only to give us sight, but also to open our interior vision, so that our Faith may become ever deeper and we may recognize Him as our only Savior. He illuminates all that is dark in life and leads men and women to live as "children of the light"

C) Life messages:

1) *We need to allow Jesus to heal our spiritual blindness.* In real life, we all have blind-spots — in our marriages, our parenting, our work habits, and our personalities. We often wish to remain in the dark, preferring darkness to light. It is even possible for the religious people in our day to be like the Pharisees: religious in worship, in frequenting the Sacraments, in prayer-life, in tithing, and in knowledge of the Bible – but blind to the poverty, injustice and pain around them. Let us remember, however, that Jesus wants to heal our blind spots. We need to ask Jesus to remove from us the root causes of our blindness, namely, self-centeredness, greed, anger, hatred, prejudice, jealousy, addiction to evil habits and hardness of heart. Let us pray with the Scottish Bible scholar William Barclay, "God our Father, help us see Christ more clearly, love him more dearly and follow him more nearly."

2) *We need to get rid of cultural blindness.* Every culture has got blind-spots. Often it is blind to things like selfless love, happiness, fidelity with true, committed sexual love in marriage, and the value of human life from birth to natural death. Our culture has become anesthetized to the violence, the sexual innuendo, and the enormous suffering in the world around us. Let us counteract this cultural blindness as., with His grace, we experience Jesus dwelling within us and within others through personal prayer, meditative reading of the Bible and a genuine Sacramental life.

3) *We need to pray for clear vision:* Peter Marshall, the former chaplain to the United States Congress used to pray, "Give us clear vision that we may know where to stand and what to stand for, because unless we stand for something, we shall fall for anything." Jonathan Swift said, "*Vision is the art of seeing things invisible.*"

Conclusion:

Let us pray with the Scottish Bible scholar William Barclay, "God our Father, help us see Christ more clearly, love him more dearly and follow him more nearly."