

# Jesus condemns 'blind' Pharisees

**A**MAZING INDEED is the grace which inspires us to sing, "I once was blind, but now I see." When we throw heart and voice into that song, we're quoting words (John 9:25) from next Sunday's Gospel.

"Amazing Grace" appropriately entitles a song based on this miracle, because grace works the cure. Faith had little to do with it. Uniquely in this miracle, Jesus never asks the man to prove his faith before the healing. Jesus sees him, smears mud on his face, and orders him to wash in the pool. Even after the miracle, the man smart-mouths to the Pharisees more than he professes faith in Christ.

The basic story (John 9:1-41) operates on two levels: It recounts a miracle, then interprets its meaning. John devotes an entire chapter of his Gospel to this event.

**E**VEN THOUGH the complete story goes on and on, the actual miracle is painted with a few deft strokes. Try reading verses 1, 6 and 7 all by themselves. You'll discover they say it all. Everything else is commentary.

In those three verses, you've probably got the earliest version of the story in your hands. After Jesus died and before the Gospels were written down, people told stories about Jesus. In the writing, the stories got expanded and organized. John went huge with this one. He inserted a dialogue between Jesus and the disciples about the origins

of the man's illness (2-5), and then the disciples fall out of the story all together while a much larger controversy ensues with the Pharisees, the man born blind, his parents and ultimately Jesus (8-41).

Here the story moves into its second level. It began as a simple miracle: "Blind man receives sight." But John parlays it into a symbol of movement from spiritual blindness into sight. The Pharisees do not accept Jesus as the Christ, and it is their blindness which Jesus condemns, not that of the physically blind. Again, the development is curious because the blind man himself did not profess faith nor did he request the miracle; he is simply the obedient recipient of amazing grace. The Pharisees sadly cannot even go that far.

**W**E HEAR this reading during Lent in conjunction with the second scrutiny for catechumens (We call them "the elect" during this season — those "chosen" for Baptism.) The choice of this reading is not hard to figure out. The long version of the story does not simply spotlight the strange power of Jesus; rather, it moves the reader from spiritual blindness to faith in him.

Another element of the story makes it especially appropriate for those preparing for Baptism. To cure his blindness, the blind man must wash in the pool of Siloam. John explains that the name means "Sent." For the man to receive sight, he must wash in the "pool" of the one sent; that is he must wash in Jesus, the one sent by God. For the elect to receive true spiritual sight, they must wash the mud of their past in the baptismal pool, in the saving waters of Jesus.

Lent invites us all to see our sinful selves with new eyes, to wash away our sins, and to find refreshment in the waters of Easter. □

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Fr. Paul Turner



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**Good News**  
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## Daily Scripture Readings

### Third Sunday of Lent Sunday, March 10

Exodus 17:3-7  
Psalms 95:1-2, 6-9  
Romans 5:1-2, 5-8  
John 4:5-42

### Monday, March 11

2 Kings 5:1-15a  
Psalms 42:2-3, 43:3-4  
Luke 4:24-30

### Tuesday, March 12

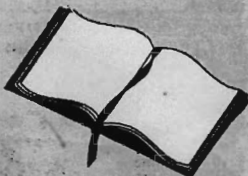
Daniel 3:25, 34-43  
Psalms 25:4-9  
Matthew 18:21-35

### Wednesday, March 13

Deuteronomy 4:1, 5-9  
Psalms 147:12-13, 15-16, 19-20  
Matthew 5:17-19

### Thursday, March 14

Jeremiah 7:23-28  
Psalms 95:1-2, 6-9  
Luke 11:14-23



### Friday, March 15

Hosea 14:2-10  
Psalms 81:6-11, 14, 17  
Mark 12:28b-34

### Saturday, March 16

Hosea 6:1-6  
Psalms 51:3-4, 18-21  
Luke 18:9-14

### Fourth Sunday of Lent Sunday, March 17

1 Samuel 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a  
Psalms 23:1-6  
Ephesians 5:8-14  
John 9:1-41

Pharisees near him heard this and said to him, "Surely we are not blind, are we?" Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What might a person who is physically blind teach us about faith and trust?

2. Share a time in your life when you felt that God enabled you to "see" in a new way.

3. For the man born blind, seeing was also an opportunity to give witness to Jesus. Name some specific ways that you could give witness to your faith this week.

Jean Kane □