

## 4th Sunday of Lent

**That's a really long gospel, isn't it? Last week's was too. And—spoiler alert—next week's will be as well. The one on the week after that is even longer. If you're a busy person, continually on the go, and you're fitting Mass into your crowded schedule according to a certain interiorly judged appropriate number of minutes to your day, these gospels will stop you in your tracks. Today's especially lays a charge on us: If we don't see the importance of noticing the adversities of others and how people react to the wonders of God, we are also blind. St. John invites us to allow time for God to go to work.**

**Adversity in others sometimes provokes compassion, but often it fills us with disgust. Whether it's a beggar on the street corner, a slow-moving shopper in the checkout line, or a depressed person who drains our emotional batteries, we may feel resentment more than pity. We are like the disciples at the beginning of this gospel, who spotted a blind man and, out of earshot, stupidly asked Jesus, "Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" We often judge others by their adversities: "They're poor because it's their own fault. They're migrants because they're criminals. Ex-cons don't deserve a vote or a job."**

**Jesus shuts the door on this kind of thinking. Illness has nothing to do with sin—even though, very commonly, when somebody gets sick, or some tragedy befalls them, they ask God, "Why me? What did I do to deserve this? How did I sin?" For Jesus, adversity is not related to sin. It couldn't be, given what he was about to endure. Instead, illness exists, he says, "so that the works of God might be made visible." God can accomplish wonders even among those who suffer—sometimes especially among those who suffer. They teach us the fragility and beauty of life and inspire us by their perseverance.**

**When we focus on our own inabilities, we may complain in later years that we can't do what we could do in earlier years. Or in our prime, we may envy others our age and younger who have accomplished much more. "Who sinned?" we want to ask Jesus. "Is my condition punishment for some sin?" "No," Jesus would likely respond. "It's so that the works of God might be made visible." Through our inabilities we may discover our abilities. These will make the glory of God shine.**

**Jesus also said in this passage, "While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." Well, now we're in the world, and we hold his light. He expects us to take time to notice adversities and how people react. In curing the blind man, Jesus sent him to a pool called "Siloam," a name that means "Sent." Jesus healed the man not to impress Jesus' enemies, but to send a new believer into the world. If we look beyond adversities and discover possibilities, we'll experience more than healing. We'll have purpose. Our problems add no eloquence to our complaints; they let God's power be seen, so we can be sent and give other people long stories to tell.**