

Fourth Sunday of Lent A/2008

Our God is a God of surprises; his thoughts are not our thoughts; his judgments are not our judgments; his rules are not like human rules. We see these simple and easy words realized in the choice of David. As human beings, we judge according to external appearances and what is visible to our eyes, but God looks at the heart. Samuel, who was impressed by the vigor and the look of the oldest sons of Jesse, is surprised to see that God has not set his heart on any one of them. Jesse, who was hoping to see one of his oldest become a king, is astonished to realize that it was the youngest, who was less than a child, who was the favorite of God.

The choice of David, instead of his big brothers who were stronger and more capable than him according to our human standards, shows us clearly that it is in the humble and the modest that God is interested. This choice confirms equally the fact that we, human beings, are not only very often misleading in our judgments, but also pass easy judgments on people and situations we do not fully understand.

One of the ways of passing easy judgment is, for instance, to think that diseases and hardships are a punishment from God. The Gospel of this day displays it very clearly in the question of the disciples to Jesus as well as in the attitude of the Pharisees. As a matter of fact, there was a belief at the time that God rewards the good and punishes the bad ones even in this world. All misfortunes, diseases and sufferings were caused by some kind of sin. But, what about someone who was unfortunate and miserable right from birth? Was God punishing him for the sins of some of his ancestors or for curse? Is not such a way of reasoning frightening? How many times did I hear it said about the Tsunami and the Hurricane Katrina?

Jesus answers that we should never speak of God's punishment. This is a pagan way of imagining God. He never punishes anybody; he can only love, and he loves particularly those who do wrong. When we are confronted with evil we should not ask ourselves whose fault it is; all we should do is to try and get rid of it, just as Jesus did. For Jesus, nobody has sinned causing this young man to be born blind. In other words, God is not the source or the cause of evil. Disease and suffering belong to our human nature. Once we are born, we are entitled to suffer and to die. It is written in our biology and in our physiology.

From the point of view of God's creation, evil is accidental; creation in itself is good. This is the reason why Jesus tries to resituate that goodness of creation by healing the blind. What matters most for Jesus is not the circumstances surrounding the disease or its origin, but what God can do right now for the sick. He can cure him.

By giving the sight to the born-blind, Jesus presents himself as the light of the world that enlightens those who are in darkness of sin and error. To get out of

darkness, one should accept Christ, believe in him and trust him. That is what the blind sincerely did. So, not only is his human existence illuminated, but also his interior life is given a new understanding. Then can he say: "I do believe, Lord". My Friends, there are some things we are able to see while we fail to see others. We belong to a culture where people of our time hold as true only what can be seen with the eyes, felt through the senses, verified scientifically. They are convinced that in this way they can understand everything and that nothing is beyond their control. But what in fact do these people see? Nothing more than material reality. But is there nothing else to see? Don't they need to be enlightened by Christ? The Gospel of today tells us that Christ has been sent to bring us a remedy that cures such blindness. May I remind you again these words of Anthony of St Expury: "The essential is invisible to the eyes; one sees well only with the heart".

The Pharisees in today's Gospel are completely blind. Not only do they doubt that Jesus is the Messiah and the messenger of God, but also they contest the legitimacy of the good he has done to the blind man. That is why they remain in their darkness and blindness despite that they have eyes to see. What I myself learn here is that the interior attitude we have vis-à-vis someone determines very often the appreciation we give to what he does. If we are not open to someone, we will hardly appreciate positively what he does.

From this experience of the blind man and the discussion that has followed, let us learn this: Salvation is given to human beings in Jesus Christ who is the light of the world. Two main attitudes are possible before Jesus, namely a welcome and a refusal. In welcoming and accepting Jesus, we get out of our own blindness, we have access to sight and to life; we allow him to take lead of our life and to lead us to the discovery of the whole truth about our world and ourselves. In rejecting him, we remain in blindness. Hence, two kinds of blindness, namely exterior and interior. Being self-sufficient on our own, to close up ourselves to God's gifts of forgiveness and mercy, to think that we can manage completely our life without Jesus' help, that is being blind interiorly.

Something very striking is worth being noticed in this Gospel: Jesus appears only in the beginning of the story and at the end. Why is it so? He does not intervene in between to let the faith of the blind man grow among the difficulties, in spite of opposition. Jesus desires that we grow in our faith, that we give testimony about him in the middle of contradiction, conflicts and opposition. All those who don't look back in spite of hardship will receive salvation. Look what is happening at the end of the scene: At the start, only one could not see, while all others did. At the end, only one could see that Jesus is not only a man of God or a prophet, but the Lord, while the others have become completely blind. May God bless you all!



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