The Miraculous Medal Association Australia

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Scripture Reflection: Fourth Sunday of Lent

Gospel – John 9:1-41

1 As he went along, he saw a man who had been blind from birth.
2 His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should have been born blind?'
3 'Neither he nor his parents sinned,' Jesus answered, 'he was born blind so that the works of God might be revealed in him.
4 'As long as day lasts we must carry out the work of the one who sent me; the night will soon be here when no one can work.
5 As long as I am in the world I am the light of the world.'
6 Having said this, he spat on the ground, made a paste with the spittle, put this over the eyes of the blind man,
7 and said to him, 'Go and wash in the Pool of Siloam' (the name means 'one who has been sent'). So he went off and washed and came back able to see.
8 His neighbours and the people who used to see him before (for he was a beggar) said, 'Isn't this the man who used to sit and beg?'
9 Some said, 'Yes, it is the same one.' Others said, 'No, but he looks just like him.' The man himself said, 'Yes, I am the one.'
10 So they said to him, 'Then how is it that your eyes were opened?'
11 He answered, 'The man called Jesus made a paste, daubed my eyes with it and said to me, "Go off and wash at Siloam"; so I went, and when I washed I gained my sight.'
12 They asked, 'Where is he?' He answered, 'I don't know.'
13 They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind.
14 It had been a Sabbath day when Jesus made the paste and opened the man's eyes,
15 so when the Pharisees asked him how he had gained his sight, he said, 'He put a paste on my eyes, and I washed, and I can see.'
16 Then some of the Pharisees said, 'That man cannot be from God: he does not keep the Sabbath.' Others said, 'How can a sinner produce signs like this?' And there was division among them.
17 So they spoke to the blind man again, 'What have you to say about him yourself, now that he has opened your eyes?' The man answered, 'He is a prophet.'
18 However, the Jews would not believe that the man had been blind without first sending for the parents of the man who had gained his sight and
19 asking them, 'Is this man really the son of yours who you say was born blind? If so, how is it that he is now able to see?'
20 His parents answered, 'We know he is our son and we know he was born blind,
21 but how he can see, we don't know, nor who opened his eyes. Ask him. He is old enough: let him speak for himself.'

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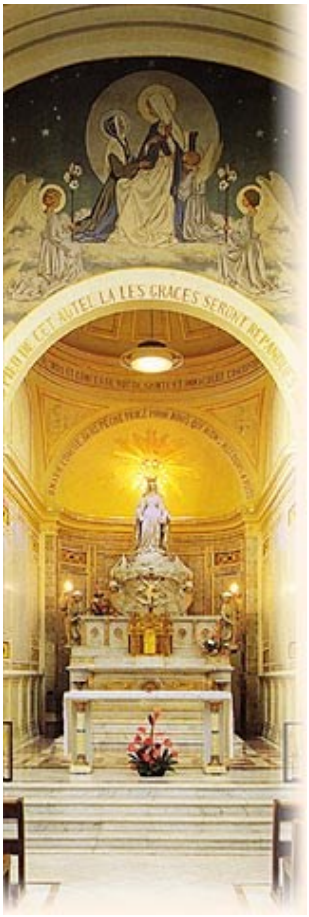

22 His parents spoke like this out of fear of the Jews, who had already agreed to ban from the synagogue anyone who should acknowledge Jesus as the Christ.
23 This was why his parents said, 'He is old enough; ask him.'
24 So the Jews sent for the man again and said to him, 'Give glory to God! We are satisfied that this man is a sinner.'
25 The man answered, 'Whether he is a sinner I don't know; all I know is that I was blind and now I can see.'
26 They said to him, 'What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?'
27 He replied, 'I have told you once and you wouldn't listen. Why do you want to hear it all again? Do you want to become his disciples yourselves?'
28 At this they hurled abuse at him, 'It is you who are his disciple, we are disciples of Moses:
29 we know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this man, we don't know where he comes from.'
30 The man replied, 'That is just what is so amazing! You don't know where he comes from and he has opened my eyes!
31 We know that God doesn't listen to sinners, but God does listen to people who are devout and do his will.
32 Ever since the world began it is unheard of for anyone to open the eyes of someone born blind;
33 if this man were not from God, he wouldn't have been able to do anything.'
34 They retorted, 'Are you trying to teach us, and you a sinner through and through ever since you were born!' And they ejected him.
35 Jesus heard they had ejected him, and when he found him he said to him, 'Do you believe in the Son of man?'
36 'Sir,' the man replied, 'tell me who he is so that I may believe in him.'
37 Jesus said, 'You have seen him; he is speaking to you.'
38 The man said, 'Lord, I believe,' and worshipped him.
39 Jesus said: It is for judgement that I have come into this world, so that those without sight may see and those with sight may become blind.
40 Hearing this, some Pharisees who were present said to him, 'So we are blind, are we?'
41 Jesus replied: If you were blind, you would not be guilty, but since you say, 'We can see,' your guilt remains.

Reflection

Jesus is again with his disciples when they come upon this blind man. The reaction of the disciples is typical. Suffering was commonly understood to be divine punishment. What is behind this assumption? It is the belief that whatever happens in the world must be God's will. Since God is just, if a person is suffering someone must have sinned, either the man himself must have sinned in the womb (there was a rabbinic opinion that spoke of this possibility), or he was suffering the effects of his parents' sin (Exodus 20:5). Jesus does not accept their assumption, but he focuses not on the cause of the blindness but on where God is in the situation, on how the man's blindness can be an occasion of grace and a means of showing forth the wonder of God's action in the world.

Here we face a profound Christian insight, which is this. God has given us freedom. When we abuse this freedom and act contrary to the will of God, evil effects follow. These cannot be attributed to God, but neither is God a passive spectator. God is present to us and brings grace to bear in every situation. In other words, everything is graced. As Michael Fallon puts it, "we are wrong to think of everything that happens as being God's will. We are never wrong to believe that God is offering us his grace in every situation, even the most sinful." (Michael Fallon, MSC: The Gospel of Saint John: an introductory commentary, page 185)

The healing of the blind man shows that Jesus is the light that has come into the darkness of the world. In other words he is the revelation of God. Moreover, the washing in the pool of Siloam suggests a further connection to baptism, which in the early church was known as 'photismos', that is 'illumination'. Again we have a reminder that Lent is the season in which our baptism is renewed, and in which we prepare to renew our baptismal vows at Easter. Jesus is the Light who has illuminated us in baptism by bringing us the revelation of God.

"In him who strengthens me and gives me support"

St Vincent de Paul spoke about the importance of prayer to members of the Congregation of the Mission, the community of priests and brothers that he founded. Here there was a focus on the practice of mental prayer. (Abelly– the life of St Vincent. Bk 3. ch 7, pages 62-63.)

The full quote is : "Give me a man (person) of prayer and he (she) will be capable of everything; he (she) will be able to say with the apostle, 'I can do all things in him who strengthens me and gives me support."

Once again we journey through Lent to the celebration of Easter. Easter time provides us with the witness of Jesus' followers to his resurrection. 'I have seen the Lord, he is risen". I wonder if that is not what Vincent experienced – and while he speaks of mental prayer – I am sure he is speaking out of his experience of relationship with the risen Lord, not just 'about' the experience of Christ. He could well be stressing for us the importance of the Risen Christ and how that encounter affects our life.

In an article called "a guide for religious beginning spiritual direction (Review for Religious. 68.1, 2009, pages 80-87), the authors Melvin C Blanchette, SS and Robert Maloney, CM, speak of Christian spirituality as "our experience of being in a gifted faith-filled relationship with Christ, which is being expressed in life's specifically human dimensions: the affective, related to feelings; the cognitive, related to thoughts and ideas; and values/attitudes, related to decisions and actions." They continue: "Some elements of the spiritual life are the following (a) an encounter with Jesus, the model of the spiritual person. (b) the experience of intimacy. (c) an appreciation of silence. (d) fidelity amidst transition, crisis or conversion. (e) integrity as a central guiding principle, drawing one's words and actions to coincide with one's inner values. (f) the capacity to 'notice', a contemplative way of 'looking'. (g) speaking and relating with others out of a faith perspective".

As the well-known song declares : "we walk by faith": We are people of prayer, when our encounter with the risen Jesus affects all aspects of our life and we are able to say that we can do all things in him who strengthens us and gives us support. We are able to recognise the movement of God's Spirit and respond to it, where the elements of our spirituality - what these two writers call an 'authentic spirituality' - are

- Perspective: a realistic perception of the reality of life.
- Principles: a comprehensive set of tested truths, and
- Practices: a consistent way of interacting with the changing world.

Fr Kevin Canty, CM National Director

Mexico City
February 22, 2020

To all the National Councils of the Association of the Miraculous Medal

By means of this letter I am convoking the Second General Assembly of the Association of the Miraculous Medal.

We will gather in Mexico City from November 14th until the November 18th, 2020 under the theme:

Evangelization and the Miraculous Medal.

With regard to the General Assembly, our General Statutes state:

[22.2] The General Assembly attempts to promote the participation and the communion of each member in the Association. The Assembly will be held at least once every six years.

The members of the National Association participate in the Assembly. Each National Association with approved Statutes, the participants are: National Director, the National Delegate (Sister) and two lay persons. The National Associations that do not have approved Statutes can send two representatives, one of which should be the National Director or the National Delegate and the other, a lay person. These representatives in the General Assembly have voice and vote.

[22.2.2] The tasks of the General Assembly. Please Review.

I am confident that you will accept this call to assemble with the enthusiasm and responsibility that will enable all of us to journey together for the good of our beloved Association.

We place this event in the loving hands of our Lord and of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal. We ask that all the effort that is made in order to participate in this gathering will bear much fruit for our mission of evangelization.

In the complementary information you will find more specific details about this event.

Your brother in Christ,

Rev. Tomaž Mavrič, CM
Superior General
Director General Association of the Miraculous Medal

We are hoping to have some delegates from Australia at the Assembly in Mexico City. The photo at right shows our two delegates at the General Assembly in Rome , November 2014: Fr Kevin Canty, CM, our National Director, and Mrs Giovanna Tesoriero. (Ed.)