

Fourth Sunday of Lent – 2023 A

**“Go, wash in the Pool of Siloam,”** Jesus tells the man born blind. He is of course unable to see, and even a sighted person would struggle after Jesus has smeared mud on his eyes. How can he possibly find his stumbling way to the Pool of Siloam, located outside the city walls?

Jesus is so often presented as our Healer in the Gospels, curing those with leprosy, paralysis, those deaf or mute. In addition to a need for healing in the body, like even today, sometimes these physical ailments carry larger consequences – to be an outcast, to be unable to take care of ourselves much less serve others, not to hear the word of God or be able to proclaim it. But this Gospel healing goes even deeper. This is not correcting some illness or injury, but giving a capability that never before existed for someone BORN blind. This man had not lost his vision; he never had it at all, and thus could not even imagine what he was missing in seeing the world he knew only by sound and touch, taste and smell. He had no way to understand what others told him about the beauty of a child’s smile, the majesty of the mountains, the prism of colors blending at sunset.

John is of course clear in this story: as God created the first Adam from the mud of the earth, so Jesus, the new Adam, sent by the Father, takes this clay and creates a new life for this blind man through the waters of Siloam that point us to Baptism. But go back to the original question ... how could he possibly find his way there? He is Sent, as Naaman the leper was sent in the Old Testament story; but this man cannot find the way alone. Though not said explicitly, the story naturally suggests that someone must have helped him, guided him, led him to the Pool. Perhaps it was a friend, perhaps a stranger, perhaps his family – but someone helped him find the water so he could wash and see.

Jesus is the Healer, but as the Sacraments and His very Incarnation as one who takes on our human nature prove, He works through the created world and other people to manifest that gift. The faith of the Church

and the witness of others preceded us; we do not create or invent this faith as our own achievement; we receive it as a gift. *It is there before us; it will be there after us.* But mature Christian faith is not simply knowing our own way to the Pool of Siloam ... it is the willingness to help another find their way. Jesus gives us the pair of commands: to follow Him, but also to go and make disciples. The first, our own discipleship, is absolutely necessary; but it is not sufficient. Admiring that beautiful sunset but lacking a desire to have others know that beauty is missing something essential.

Lent deepens our understanding that the Light of the World took all the darkness on Himself, so that Light could blaze forth again from an empty tomb. The new Easter fire we will kindle and bless in a few weeks becomes a share in that same light, passed along to each other in that powerful moment at the opening of the Easter Vigil. Those candles remind us of our own Baptismal candles, for it is in Baptism that we receive the gift of God's own life, the capability to see as God sees, in truth and mercy.

We cannot bring the deepest healing and vision needed; that is the work of God, and so our sincere prayers have meaning and purpose. But inspired and guided by that faith and moved by God's mercy, we are also sent, today, to help one another find the way to healing and hope, their own Pool of Siloam.