

6. February 2025

THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN
“The healing of a man born blind”

Jn 9:1-12

As he passed by, Jesus saw a man blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus answered, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him. We must work the works of him who sent me, while it is day; night comes, when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” As he said this, he spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle and anointed the man’s eyes with the clay, saying to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Silo’am” (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing. The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar, said, “Is not this the man who used to sit and beg?” Some said, “It is he”; others said, “No, but he is like him.” He said, “I am the man.” They said to him, “Then how were your eyes opened?” He answered, “The man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, ‘Go to Silo’am and wash’; so I went and washed and received my sight.” They said to him, “Where is he?” He said, “I do not know.”

The works of God are to be made manifest. This is the specific purpose of the healing of the man born blind, together with the good work done for the benefit of this suffering man. All that Jesus says and does is to reveal to the Jewish people the divine authority by which He does the works of His Father, who is also their Father. They must believe in Him in order to be saved and to understand that the Messiah, for whom they had waited so long and for whose coming they had prepared, is now in their midst.

A writing by Moses Maimonides, one of the most prominent rabbis of the 13th century, can serve as an example of how much the Jewish people awaited the coming of the Messiah, a hope that still persists among believing Jews today. In his Thirteen Articles of Faith, he describes in point 12:

‘[The twelfth principle consists in] knowing with certainty that the Messiah will come and not thinking that he will delay and however long he may delay we will await him. (...) It is our duty to magnify him, love him and pray for him, just as they prophesied about him from Moses to Malachi. Anyone who doubts or scoffs at the coming of the Messiah, denies the Torah, for in it his coming is textually assured.’

This expectation of the Messiah was very much alive at the time of the Lord, which is why it is particularly painful that many of the scribes and Pharisees were closed-minded, thus fulfilling the words of the Prologue of St John: "*He came to his own home, and his own people received him not*" (Jn 1:11).

Jesus Himself knew that His time on earth was limited and that, as long as He was in the world, He would be the light that would enlighten all those who would receive it. So He went to the blind man to have compassion on him and to do another sign, not only to heal the man in front of Him, but also so that all those who did not recognise Him would be cured of their blindness and have their eyes opened.

This healing is therefore a sign of great significance, the meaning of which is not limited to the time of His earthly life. Unfortunately, many people are unable to recognise the grace offered to us in Jesus. Indeed, the Messiah did not come only for the people of Israel, but His disciples received from Him the mandate to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth (Mt 28:19-20), thus becoming themselves the light of the world and the salt of the earth (Mt 5:13-14).

By encountering Jesus, every person can be cured of blindness and begin to see. When the light of faith enters our hearts, our inner eyes are opened and we begin to see with the eyes of Jesus; that is, the light begins to shine in us and teaches us to understand God's plans for humanity and for ourselves.

And in those who believe, those other words of St John's Prologue are fulfilled: "*To all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God*" (Jn 1:12).

Jesus had made mud with His saliva, with which He anointed the eyes of the blind man and sent him to wash in the pool of Siloam. Siloam means 'sent', and Jesus surely

wanted to associate this sign with the pool of that name, so that the Jews would have another way of knowing who He was.

The man did as Jesus told him and was able to see. The whole event was a cause for great joy because, as the man who had been cured later told the Pharisees, "*never since the world began has it been heard that any one opened the eyes of a man born blind*" (Jn 9:32).

But those Pharisees who heard about Jesus' miracle could not rejoice at this extraordinary sign, nor could they reflect on it. Nor was Jesus able to win their hearts with this clear and obvious sign of God's love. On the contrary, as we will hear tomorrow, they remained closed to Jesus.