

Reflecting

ON THE

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

JOHN 9: 1 – 41



PASTORAL FORMATION DEPARTMENT



STEP 1

***Prepare to be attentive to
The God Who Speaks in this story.***

Light a candle or tea light if possible. Perhaps place some leaves or a flower from the garden next to the light then breathe deeply and allow yourself to become still. Ask for God's grace and light to fill your heart and your mind as you open to the Word.



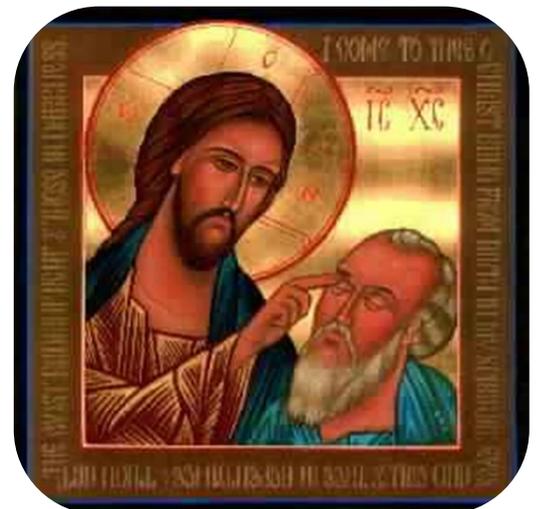
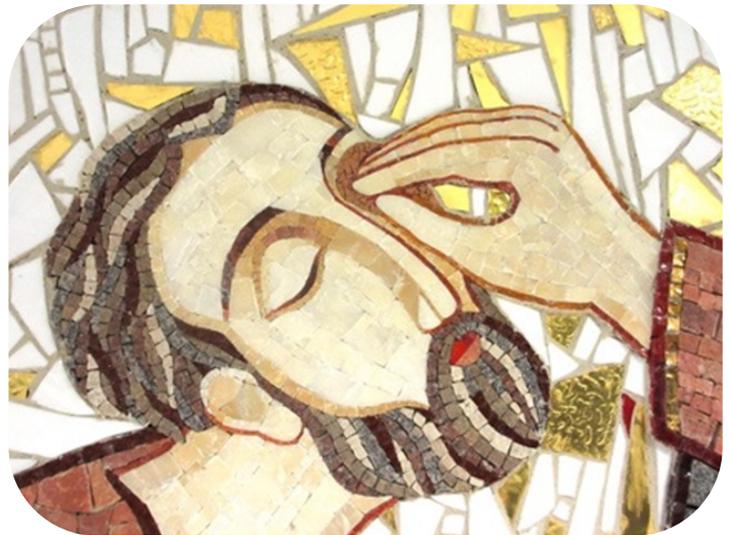
STEP 2

*Spend some time just looking
at the three images.*

Where is your eye drawn to?

What feelings are you experiencing?

What are you noticing?



STEP 3

Now, either read slowly to yourself the story below or better still, read it aloud, again slowly.

Spend time in silence then be aware of what is striking you: any words or phrases that seem to be important for you.

What images are present for you?

Do you have any questions?

As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see.

The neighbours and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" Some were saying, "It is he."

Others were saying, "No, but it is someone like him." He kept saying, "I am the man." But they kept asking him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' Then I went and washed and received my sight." They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."

They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, "He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see." Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not observe the sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And they were divided. So they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened." He said, "He is a prophet." The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" His parents answered, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself." His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him." So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, "Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner." He answered, "I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" He answered them, "I have told you

already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?" Then they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from." The man answered, "Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?" And they drove him out.

Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" He answered, "And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him." Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he." He said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped him.

Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind." Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him, "Surely we are not blind, are we?" Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains.

The gospel of the Lord.

STEP 5

***Read through the poem
written by the
Dominican Sister
Elizabeth Michael Boyle.***

STEP 4

***Now visit the part of the story that
seems to be most important for you.***

***Read this part a second time, aloud if
possible and allow it to nourish you.***

THE PRICE

To be born blind is to be born without:
to believe without icons
to worship without idols
to reflect without mirrors
to live without "living up to"
any image, especially your own.

I had no idea of darkness
until I saw the light.

Bathing in the pool of Siloah
I didn't have the sense
to search its clear bright waters
for a glimpse of my own face.

And so it was that his kind eyes
Were the first to meet my own.
"So, this is what we look like,
And this is what it feels like to be seen."
If only sight had stopped there.

For then I yearned to show my parents
but their eyes flinched and failed to hide
other faces --- judging, staring, bruising
fearing him, fearing me.

I had no idea of darkness
until I saw the light.

***STEP 6
As a result of your
reflection,
offer some prayers of
intercession for the
people and situations
in our world today
that seem to you
to be most in need.***

PSALM 23

The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want;
He makes me lie in pastures green.
He leads me by the still, still waters,
His goodness restores my soul.

*And I will trust in you alone,
And I will trust in you alone,
For your endless mercy follows me,
Your goodness will lead me home.*

He guides my ways in righteousness,
And he anoints my head with oil,
And my cup, it overflows with joy,
I feast on his pure delights.

*And I will trust in you alone,
And I will trust in you alone,
For your endless mercy follows me,
Your goodness will lead me home.*

And though I walk the darkest path,
I will not fear the evil one,
For you are with me, and your rod and staff
Are the comfort I need to know.

*And I will trust in you alone,
And I will trust in you alone,
For your endless mercy follows me,
Your goodness will lead me home.*

Adapted by Stuart Townend
YouTube <https://youtu.be/pN4tPkX0MG0>

REFLECTION ON THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Just recently I was in a local prison and met a young man called Craig. He was 22, well over 6 foot covered in tattoos and obviously spent a lot of time in the gym. He was a bit scary if I am going to be honest. We were singing some choruses and Sister Moira said to the men 'You might remember this from school' and Craig in an aside said, 'I never went to school.' I knew there was a story. So, when we had a break, I caught up with him and asked him what he'd meant. He told me that his mum was a heroin addicted prostitute and when he was five her boyfriend had beaten him up and thrown him out.

I was immediately filling up as I imagined this vulnerable five-year-old on the streets with nowhere to go. He said that, on and off, for years he lived under the flyover at Queens drive. Every time he heard a police siren, he picked up his cardboard box and walked. He got himself into crime, stealing to stay alive and became part of a Fagin style group pickpocketing. Robbery, prostitution, you name it, he'd done it. He'd been in a couple of young offender's institutions and then graduated to the big stuff and was in prison for drugs and GBH. He'd attempted suicide a couple of times and was heavily medicated to keep him stress free. I was reeling by the end of the story when he took hold of my hand and said, 'without people like the chaplains and you and the others coming in and out, I would die. I couldn't help but feel ashamed at the way in which I had judged him by the tattoos and the gym honed body and realised again just how blind we can all become to the presence of God in another.'

I thought of my encounter with him as I read both the first reading and the Gospel for this weekend. In the first book of Samuel we read that God's concern is not with the outer appearance but with the heart and then in the Gospel we are challenged to look at our own blindness and the damage it can do. It seems to me that blindness of the heart is far more damaging than physical blindness because it stops us growing and finding life and more often than not it's those who think they can see who can't see at all.

That was the problem that the Scribes and Pharisees had. They thought they'd got it all together. They had their nice neat religious package and anything that challenged it was for them beyond the pale. They weren't able to see the God who was present in all things. They weren't able to see the God present in Jesus nor were they able to see the work of God in the life of a little blind man who was outside the boundaries of orthodox Judaism.

The danger with all religious people is that we can become blind within. We can have our neat little package but not be open to the presence of God. We can go to Mass every day and know everything the church teaches and be blind to the presence of God in our brothers and sisters. We can be so caught up in our own self-righteousness and limited vision that we close ourselves off from the God who is in people of all faiths and no faith. Maybe the current crisis we are in will help us all open our eyes to the goodness in others.

A good test for spiritual blindness is to gauge how open you are to others, and to discovering and meeting the God within them. Sadly, most of us simply close ourselves off from people who don't fit in to our neat little understanding. We put such pride on being right and it blinds us to the presence of God in others.

It's a real challenge to us as Church and as individuals. Thank goodness for Pope Francis and his deep-seated understanding that we have to listen to one another and become a synodal church where everyone feels accepted and listened to. Not to do that results in blindness to the presence of God. You know the truth is that God is either present or not present. God can never be partially present, in some things and not in others. That's never been Christian truth. God has entered into the human condition and is present and our role in the world is to recognise that presence and name it and affirm it, not to say we're right and you're wrong.

Today we celebrate the story of a little blind man who began to see and whose seeing challenged the Scribes and the Pharisees to open their own hearts and we pray that where we are blind our eyes will be opened and we will give glory to the God we meet.

Fr Chris Thomas, Irenaeus Project, Liverpool

AMAZING GRACE

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost, but now I'm found
Was blind, but now I see

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear
And grace my fears relieved
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed

*My chains are gone, I've been set free
My God, my Saviour has ransomed me
And like a flood His mercy reigns
Unending love, amazing grace*

The Lord has promised good to me
His word my hope secures
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures

*My chains are gone, I've been set free
My God, my Saviour has ransomed me
And like a flood His mercy reigns
Unending love, amazing grace*

*My chains are gone, I've been set free
My God, my Saviour has ransomed me
And like a flood His mercy reigns
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Additional words by Chris Tomlin
<https://youtu.be/Jbe7OruLk8I>

ARCHDIOCESE OF LIVERPOOL

B E C O M I N G T H E C H U R C H T H A T G O D I S C A L L I N G U S T O B E