

Fr. Nick Dant's Homily, Saint Matthew Catholic Church, Indianapolis
Fourth Sunday in Lent, Scrutiny Mass, March 13-14, 2021, Cycle A

The story of the man born blind from John's Gospel offers a prophetic challenge using the symbolism of light! The man born blind is led from darkness to light by Jesus. In this light, the blind man, now able to see, comes to see Jesus for who He truly is. Seeing clearly, the man born blind experiences himself liberated from his former shackles of living in darkness.

In her autobiography, The Story of My Life, Helen Keller described her own experience of being liberated from the dark world of blindness. A childhood illness left her deaf and blind at 18 months, and her next few years were filled with angry outbursts and frustrated fits of violence against those who were at a loss as to how they could best help her, "I got used to the silence and the darkness that surrounded me and forgot that it had ever been different until she came – my teacher – who was to set my spirit free. Thus, I came up out of Egypt and stood before Sinai and a power divine touched my spirit and gave it life. From that sacred moment, I heard a voice which said, 'Knowledge is love and light and vision!'" Although Keller never regained her sight or her hearing, she went on to experience the beauties and mysteries of life with such clarity that she was able to share what she called her "soul's sudden awakening" with the rest of the world.

The blind man from our Gospel story came out of "Egypt" too; he was liberated from the slavery which his blindness has regulated him. Like Helen Keller the blind man experienced liberation from exile. At Jesus' Word, he began to know dignity; he now knew a freedom that previously eluded him. The man born blind emerged not only from his physical blindness, but from his spiritual darkness as well. Liberated from his inner blindness, the man began really to see, and came really to believe in Jesus as Messiah and Lord.

The miracle of our Gospel Story is not that Jesus gave physical sight to the man born blind, but that Jesus opened the eyes of the man's heart, just as Helen Keller's inner eyes were opened. In the lengthy exchanges with his neighbors and Pharisees, that followed his healing by Jesus, the blind man gradually comes to see more clearly with his heart. He moves from not knowing Jesus (They ask? "Where is he?" He says: "I don't know"), to proclaiming to the Pharisees: "He is a prophet" and a "man from God." Finally, in dialogue with Jesus again he is completely healed; in the Light Jesus bathes him in, he sees Jesus for who he really is – not only the "Son of Man" (Messiah), but his very Lord and God. The man said to Jesus: "'I do believe, Lord,' and he worshipped him."

What Jesus did for the man born blind, Jesus does for all of us, if we but leave behind our personal darkness and seek to live in Jesus, who is the Light of the World. What blinds us to follow unreservedly Jesus as the Light that frees us, is our sins. As long as we sin we are not totally free, we cannot see clearly. Our catechumens, like the man born blind, seek to see clearly. They seek to be healed of their blindness, liberated from darkness. So, they can live in the light and see clearly the way that leads to eternal life. The way of course, is Jesus; the way of the Cross that leads to Easter Glory. Once again this weekend we celebrate a Scrutiny with our catechumens as they journey to the Easter Sacraments. In our prayer we help our catechumens deepens their desire to be freed from darkness by Christ, who is the True Light that shows the way to eternal life.