

“I was blind but now I see” (John 9:13-39)

* The problem of physical blindness discussed on 7 Sunday after Epiphany echoes back to the middle of Lent where we are found. Well, this subject may be interesting again in making us sure that all of us have experienced one or another type of blindness during our earthly life. According to the old belief, blindness as a birth defect was equal to a punishment for sin. Today on hearing the gospel lesson, we received confirmation of what we've stated. However, the blind person from John 9 was an exception to this rule, said Jesus, (v.3). Yes, he was born blind physically and suffered for a certain time but not because of parental sin or his own. Jesus said that misfortune happened with him in order God's glory would appear before his eyes as well as before others'. It says that man's healing assisted him in his salvation; but the religious leaders received nothing except judgment. When miraculous healing got into effect, the man's inner eyes were opened and he had seen the Saviour of the world, (Joh 4:42).

* Now let's speak a little about thing that was experienced by a blind person after healing. The perceptive reading leads us to the conclusion that spiritual healing also took place in the person who was healed physically. There we observe the double healing that caused really great joy. Unlike physical blindness, spiritual healing is needed by all people. The gospel of John refers to such a healing as spiritual rebirth (Joh 3:3), also called *the conversion*. As soon as people were converted, or healed from their spiritual blindness, they became able to perceive Jesus very personally, and they experienced the joy of eternal bliss, all at once. For example, the English poet and clergyman John Newton (1725–1807) reflected on his spiritual healing very excitingly, *Amazing grace! How sweet the sound That saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but now am found— Was blind, but now I see.*

* In one accord with John Newton, we acknowledge ourselves as ex-spiritually blind people. Speaking about myself, there was a time when I had not known my Saviour Jesus Christ. I was a stranger to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God (Eph 2:13) until my own conversion. I remember that moment in detail even though it happened many years ago. After conversion I could truly say that Jesus is the Lord, the captain of my salvation, the rock of ages and the creator of all things whose kingdom will never end. The amazing inner vision of God who loves me overwhelmed me with joy I cannot express by words. Only thing I know that I was lost and Jesus found me; I was spiritually blind, but now I can perceive Jesus by my inner eyes.

* Following the liturgical peculiarities of the Lent, we omit alleluias, joyful *Gloria in Excelsis* and *This is the Feast*. Doing this we want to emphasize somber disposition in remembrance of the Christ's passion on the cross. But despite all of this, we cannot suppress the inner joy on hearing the wonderful stories of men's salvation from the Bible, especially because they echo back to our own stories.

The gospel reading assigned for today is not an exception. It says how Jesus healed a blind man since his birth. He just spat on the ground, made mud with the saliva, put it on the man's eyes and sent him to wash off the mud in Siloam Pool. When the man went back, he no longer needed a staff or helper because his eyes were opened, and he could see the beauties of the world. We cannot understand how great was the joy of that blind man who had never seen before because we've never been in his body. In this case, we've needed someone who has been in that man's body. Thanks to Google, we found a person who willingly shared her life experience with the public. The following is a person's witness.

* *During my time in the darkness, she said, I learned what some people experience their entire lives. My other senses became more important to me. People were recognized by the sound of their footsteps, their perfume, their voice, and how their face felt. I had to remember things because I could not write them down. ... I had to have my medical instructions read by someone else. I was dependent on someone else to tell me which door was the Lady's room. I learned what it was like to be a prisoner, and no metal bars were needed to keep this blind person in her room. I dared not venture outside of my tiny world. As we grow older, it seems only natural to wish we were young again. Children have to have someone hold their hand when they cross the street, be taken to the restroom, cooked for, dressed, bathed, read to, and be constantly watched over; children are afraid of the dark. Being a 42-year-old child is not what you are supposed to be.*

* *After all, she said, "beauty is in the eye of the beholder." ... a sunset is pointless. Television and movies are just not the same when all you can do is listen, and how can you tell about a rainbow to someone who has always been blind? I had a new answer for the age-old question of "why is the sky blue?" My new answer was "it isn't," just as the grass and trees are not green, and a fire truck is not red. Moon, stars no longer exist at night. In fact, the sky no longer has a day, It is always dark as night. There is no longer the debate over the ocean being green or blue, murky or clear; roses are red or violets Having this picture in mind may help us to understand a little better the joy experienced by the man healed by Jesus.*

* Suddenly, after washing off the mud, his eyes opened, the permanent darkness gave a place up for the marvelous light. The abstractive ideas were replaced with real things. Now the man could see all around him - the precious colors and their owners, the faces and even himself. On seeing all these things his heart was astounded. *Friend, what's the matter with you, can you tell us?* The answer was simple, just unspoken because the emotions were too deep for language to find its way to say a word. A little later the person was able to say, *I am the man*, (v.9) but many didn't believe him saying, *No, he only looks like him*. Soon the conversation received its further development, *"How then were your eyes opened?"*

* I am sure, on hearing such a story many ophthalmologists would fill up with jealousy, and it is understandable; but why were the religious people green with envy?

They didn't say any word of salutation or congratulation. They didn't glorify God in Jesus, but rebuked and offended the man who said the truth, " ... *One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!*"(v. 25).

Another amazing thing here is that the healing of the man's physical blindness was not the end of the event; soon the man could perceive God in Christ Jesus.

* Being humiliated by neighbors (v.8), by parents (v.23), and by the Jewish authorities (v.34) the man was found by Jesus. *Do you believe in the Son of Man?* was Jesus' question. *"Who is he, sir? ... Tell me so that I may believe in him.* Jesus replied, *You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you.*

In the twinkling of an eye the inner vision revealed the Son of Man who alone could endure the fearful penalty for mankind's transgressions; then experiencing the new discovery for himself, the man made confession and worshiped the Lord, (v.38). That is the end of the story of double healing from blindness. The great joy of discovering the both worlds, physical and spiritual, was experienced by many men and women.

These were unbelievable experiences, beyond all understanding, for the benefit of all who have ever perceived God in Christ Jesus; to whom they and we render all glory with the Father and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

* The story of the miraculous healing from blindness continues throughout the ages and the number of witnesses to this was great. Here we want to finish with one more story in order to bring an all-inclusive idea to a successful conclusion. It says that a man lost his sight but in that misfortune he found his Savior. Many times he had heard the expressions of sympathy for him. But the blind man usually responded with optimism. —*Don't pity me; I am actually very fortunate. If I would have kept my eyesight, I might be blind yet. Before I could never see Jesus, and I was not interested in Him. But I see Him now, and I am much happier today than I was before.* Later the man's sight was restored after an operation. And when all these happened, the man prayed, — *Dear Lord, protect and keep me, so that the things these eyes now see may never again lead me away from the light my inward sight beholds!* With that man we say, *Amen.*