

Lenten Vespers Reflection at Caritas Christi - Sunday, March 15, 2026

Written by Sister Barbara Ann Smelko, SC

In the scripture reading from the Book of Kings proclaimed at this morning's liturgy, the prophet Samuel speaks:

"God does not see as humans see. Humans look on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart."

- What is it like not to be able to see? Many of us with glasses know a tiny bit of that experience. Difficulty in reading the newspaper, directions to fix the lawn mower, signs along the highway. But total blindness!! That's another story.
- For a few minutes, let us close our eyes and experience somewhat the absence of seeing altogether. So, close your eyes. Relax. Close your eyes. Relax.
- Oftentimes we use the word darkness, we say we can't see, describing the experience as the absence of light. "Who turned out the lights?"
- It's like there's nothing, NO Thing. A black space.
Yet, very quickly, we discover the use of our sense of touch. We feel our face. "So that's what they call a nose!!" And what we call ears, feel where our eyes are. There is something there. We discover our own self. We are something. This is. ME!! I am someone.
AND, there's a beyond myself. I need someone else to show me what's beyond my nose and ears. Is there someone out there who can help me discover what they call a tree? I would love to touch a tree. Feel the bark. Reach up. Climb onto a branch. Climb a tree!!! Blindness is a call to REACH OUT to others, to explore what is beyond my very self.
- **Pray and sing with me, this short melody:** Open My Eyes
"Open my eyes, lord, help me to see like you, open my eyes, lord, help me to see."
- Jesus spoke to the man born blind, a beggar at the gate of the city. Jesus made a paste with some dust of the earth and saliva from his mouth and placed the salve on the man's eyes.
"Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" he said. (The word "Siloam" means SENT!) The man is SENT to wash in the pool of Siloam.
"SO, he went and washed and came back seeing."
" ... I went and washed and received my sight" he screamed.
" ... He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see."
- OPEN YOUR EYES EVERYONE
- These fifty days of Lenten journey calls us to explore the blind spots within our very self. Discover the dark spots keeping me from exploring the tree I have not yet seen, the places inside me where I may have "turned out the lights" AND, where am I being sent???
- Jesus' words are prophetic, "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." Lent calls us to be Jesus' voice in the world in which we live. We are called to be that light of Christ Jesus wherever we are sent. Jesus "came into this world, that those who do not see may see ... "

- FUNNY!! Telling one's story and being heard is not always that easy. When the beggar man born blind literally saw his neighbors for the first time and told them, "The man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash', so I went and washed and received my sight", he was questioned about who this Jesus was.

So, they took him to the synagogue leaders, who found it disturbing that the event took place on the sabbath. The man's parents were called in to speak for him. Caught in the middle of the argument, and when questioned, they replied that their son was old enough to speak for himself. Finally, the synagogue leaders agreed that if anyone should confess Jesus to be the Christ, they would be put out of the synagogue.

They said to the man for the last time: "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?", and the man firmly said, "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again?"

- This wonder-filled scripture today started with the man born blind. As he spreads the good news of being healed and his belief in Jesus, the people around him are invited into the miracle. But, how one "SEES" with their hearing can be filled with blind spots as well.
- **Pray and sing with me, the second part of this short melody:** Open My Ears
"Open my ears, Lord, help me to hear your voice, open my ears, Lord, help me to hear."
- The blind man asked Jesus to see and was given his sight.
- The blind man tells his friends what Jesus did for him. They heard and were amazed.
- The temple leaders hear the story and find it impossible to believe and accept, and casts the man out of the synagogue, which means being once again an outcast of the village.
- "Jesus heard that the church leaders had cast the man out of the temple. Jesus searched for the man until he found him." Jesus says to the man, "I came into this world that those who do not see may see. Do you believe?" The man replied, "Lord, I believe," and worshiped him.

Our Lenten scripture journey today is about seeing and hearing with a loving heart. The three - seeing, hearing, and loving- are so intertwined in the mystery of God's company along the way. Seeing God, hearing God's voice, embracing God's love, with the touch of clay on one's eyes, is what we are sent to do.

With a loving heart, the blindness can be overcome. With a loving heart, the deafness can be opened. With a loving heart, we can reach out to others in a way we couldn't before. We are being sent out every day to profess openly, "Jesus put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see."

- **Pray and sing with me, the finale of our sung-prayer:** "Open my Heart."
"Open my heart, lord, help me to love like you, open my heart, lord, help me to love."