

Anointing for Sight

When John says Jesus spread mud on the eyes of the man born blind, the word John uses (*epechrisen*) actually means “anointed.” Anointing has been part of the baptismal rite from the earliest days of the Church. At Baptism we who were “born blind,” culturally conditioned by the darkness of this world’s attitudes and values, were anointed to see. Like David, whom Samuel anointed to be king, we were chosen by God and anointed, and “the spirit of the LORD came mightily” upon us.

We were anointed to be prophets, people who see how the general teaching of Jesus applies to our world. We become prophets not when we learn the teachings of Jesus but when we see how they call us to change the way we do things in family and social life, business and politics. The blind man in the story became a prophet when he was anointed with mud, earth mixed with Jesus’ saliva, and then was “washed” (baptized) in the pool whose name (Siloam) means “sent.” When we confront the reality of this world with the truth that comes from Jesus’ mouth, then we accept our baptismal mission and thereby become prophetic.

Pope John XXIII convened Vatican Council II with a call to bring the contemporary world into contact with the life-giving energies of the gospel. The Church’s mission is to bridge the gap between this world and God, between the darkness of the culture and the light of Christ. We do this by being earth ourselves. Our physical bodies are made into “mud”—something moist and pliable, a matrix of life like the primordial ooze from which life emerged on earth—by being blended with the truth coming from the mouth of Jesus. When our own transformed and prophetic life-

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4TH SUNDAY OF LENT

I Samuel 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a;
Ephesians 5:8-14; John 9:1-41

styles—our “baptized” words, choices, policies, behavior—are applied to the eyes of the culture, the world can see again. By living in this world and yet apart from it, we become for others what Baptism anoints us to be. As Christians we are not simply involved in family, school, social life, business and politics; we are “applied to” all these areas of life like an ointment.

We do not merely exist in the world; we are sent in, sent to model a different outlook.

For this we must come of age. The parents of the man born blind would not answer for him; they said, “He is of age; ask him.” And the man spoke fearlessly. To be prophets we cannot hide behind the skirts of the Church’s teaching. We cannot defend our attitudes, our values, our choices by saying, “The Church teaches...” or even “The Bible says...” We have to think about what God teaches through the Church or the Bible until we are transformed and can say for ourselves, “I see it.” We are not mere channels to pass on the living water of Christ’s teaching; we are “mud paste,” people impregnated with his truth, warm bodies transformed by his words, people in daily, physical contact with

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this world to heal it. We are ointment, not pipelines. We heal by what we are, not just by what we “pass on.”

Our impact on the world is not automatic. We too were “born blind,” and we acquire clear vision only gradually. Saint Paul reminds us, “For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light.” God’s light is within us, but if we are to produce every kind of goodness, justice and truth, that light must permeate our family and social life, school life, work and politics. This means we need to read and reflect on Christ’s teachings and on his example. We need to see our lives under his light. Then the values which are now overshadowed by our culture’s preoccupations become clearly visible; then all the dark corners that no one ever talks about will be bathed in light.

REFLECTING ON THIS WEEK'S GOSPELS

Fourth Week of Lent

Pray daily: God our Father, your Word, Jesus Christ, spoke peace to a sinful world. Teach us, the people who bear his name, to follow the example he gave us. May our faith, hope and love turn hatred to love, conflict to peace, death to eternal life. Amen.

Monday: John 4:43-54. Jesus said to the royal official, “Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe.” The official replied, “Sir, come down before my little boy dies.” Can you pray with absolute trust that, regardless of what you see, God loves you enough to provide everything you need?

Tuesday: John 5:1-16. Jesus asked the paralyzed man, “Do you want to be made well?... Stand up, take your mat and walk.” Do you believe that Jesus is offering what you need to live the life of grace more fully? Do you want it?

Wednesday: John 5:17-30. Jesus said, “I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just, because I seek to do not my own will but the will of him who sent me.” Do you consciously base every

judgment and decision on what you hear Jesus saying in the Gospels?

Thursday: Matthew 1:16, 18-21, 24a (Joseph, Husband of Mary). “Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.” Joseph agreed to never have no sexual relations with Mary, his true wife. It was his contribution to saving the world. Do you think it was worth it? How are the sacrifices in your life the price you pay for helping to save the world? Is it worth what it costs you?

Friday: John 7:1-2, 10, 25-30. Jesus said, “I have not come on my own... I know him [the Father], because I am from him, and he sent me.” How would your life change if you remembered that you do not go to work or to social events on your own but rather are sent by God? Do all your actions at home, at school, work and recreation show that you know Jesus?

Saturday: John 7:40-53. The guards sent to arrest Jesus said, “Never has anyone spoken like this!” Would the people you deal with say that you speak and act in a way that is different from others? Do they ever say, “No one does that!” or “Nobody thinks like that!”? Is that because you are thinking and speaking the truth as Jesus teaches it?

SEVERAL SUGGESTIONS FOR LENT

Prayer: At the end of each day, ask what you have done that day which was different because it was consciously based on something Jesus said or did.

Fasting: Change something in your lifestyle. Ask “How does this bear witness to the values of Jesus?” until you find something you have, do or say that could become more radically Christian.

Almsgiving: Choose to improve something in your work or school environment, or in your family or social life, simply by changing your behavior in some specific way. Be “salt of the earth” by adding taste from the gospel to something you do.