



April 3, 2011 The Fourth Sunday of Lent

*Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you are saying, 'We see,' so your sin remains.—
John 9:41*

Dear Friends;

In 1902 Helen Keller wrote her autobiography in a series in *Ladies' Home Journal*. As a result of a childhood illness at age 19 months, Helen was left blind and deaf. Her life became filled with angry outbursts and violent tantrums against those who did not know how to help her. Helen wrote, *"I got used to the silence and 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!'"*

Helen never regained her sight or hearing but she was able to experience life with such clarity that she was able to share her insights with others. She was able to see what was important and helped others to see it as well.

There is a saying in English, "There are none so blind, as those who will not see." There is physical blindness but there are also other kinds of blindness. There is the blindness that is willful ignorance. One can be blinded by selfishness, fear, hatred, arrogance or jealousy.

Today we hear the story of the man born blind from the Gospel of John. Like Helen Keller, this man may have had physical blindness but that did not prevent him from insight. He with the eyes of faith could see who Jesus was. His restored physical sight merely reflects the vision that he has by faith.

The Pharisees are unable to see because they are not open to receive Jesus. They have already decided what they know and no one can tell them anything different. They decided that illness is a result of sin and no one can convince them otherwise. They have also decided that Jesus is a fraud and now they just need the evidence to prove it. They are blinded by arrogance and jealousy.

We are living in extremely difficult times and in such times people want to cling to what are familiar—ideologies, the way things were, past solutions. All of this can prevent us from facing the difficult work facing us. In our fear to keep what little we have left, we can look for scapegoats who we can blame for our problems. We can also be pitted against one another by those forces that control media and government.

We need to have the insight of grace and the light of the Gospel to dispel the darkness of ignorance, poverty and the widening gap between rich and poor. There are many who behave like the Pharisees. They tell us that the problems of the poor are because of their moral failings. These same people do not see that more and more wealth is concentrated in fewer and fewer people. They do not see that such inequities lead to revolutions. Many are blinded; they speak of deregulation, markets and capitalism as if these are articles of religious faith, rather than human (and therefore fallible) constructs.

Once when I mentioned this critique in a group, someone suggested that I was speaking of wealth re-distribution. I was at first taken aback. But in a sense I was. Economies are about how we distribute wealth—the question is, do we want to spread wealth around or concentrate it in the few?

I do not know what the answer to our economic troubles will be. But the solution will be found when we can all again see our way to the common good. We need to see each other in terms of cooperation rather than competition. We need to see that we are co-responsible for the state of our society. And we need to see Christ in the faces of each other and of the poor.

Peace,

Fr Ron