

Fourth Sunday of Lent – Year A (2020)

Two things often jump out at me when I read stories from Sacred Scripture.

On one hand, I'm often amazed at the similarities I see between people who long ago and people living today. Thousands of years may have passed lived, but in many ways, people really haven't really changed all that much.

We seem to have many of the same problems and concerns: trying our best to make a living and feed our families and put a roof over our heads. We still worry about being safe from harm . We still love and hate and fight and make up. And yes, we still sin.

But the other thing that often jumps out at me is the other side of the coin—the way in which people long ago often *didn't think* like we do today. Yes, we might be quite similar, but we are also very different.

One of those differences is on display in the story of *The Man Born Blind*. And this story has a treasure trove of meaning—a richness that can allow us, in faith, to glean much from it.

It begins with a shocking sort of understanding, a disturbing kind of belief: “*Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?*” A question Jesus quickly answers: “*Neither he nor his parents sinned; . . .*”

This deep-seated idea that God might inflict blindness (or any other affliction) on someone because of his or her sin, or worse yet, because of someone else's sin—is an idea at which many today both mock and ridicule.

And while we don't fully understand why some people have hardships and others do not, or why some people wrestle with all sorts of illnesses, while others are pillars of health—the one thing we don't believe is that any of these things are punishment for sin, and absolutely NOT because of the sin of any other person.

Yet, that is precisely what people believed in the Jesus walked this earth, and truthfully what some cultures and individuals believe to this day).

The God we believe in is not like that at all. We believe in a God who is not resentful and ruthless, but loving—so much so that he became one of us and died for our salvation.

And so, when we see that sort of attitude on display in stories such as this, we immediately think to ourselves, “That doesn't make any sense. That's not how God works. Someone's sin could never make another person blind.”

Or could it?

Those of us of a certain age (and maybe some young people who enjoy musical theater) will remember the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical South Pacific. It's about U.S. troops stationed on an island during World War II.

As with all musicals there is one song that best expresses the heart of the story, and in South Pacific, it's called: ***“You've Got to Be Carefully Taught.”***

In this song, a soldier struggling with feelings for a native girl, sings about prejudice, and how we often grow up to have the same attitudes as the people most important to us. It's both touching and painful as it attempts to reveal some deep truths about why we often think the way we think.

Could someone's sin make another person blind? Absolutely! You bet.

But God is not responsible. We are. We take our harmful attitudes, our sinful thoughts, our hatred and bitterness and cynicism and greed and dishonesty, and we pass it on to others. Maybe without us even being aware that we are doing it.

Our own blindness can become someone else's blindness.

And so, as we continue our ***once-in-a-lifetime*** journey through Lent, as we take a deep look within ourselves, let us be sure to take a good look at our own "blindness"; our "blindness" as something that doesn't just harm ourselves, .

The Eucharist we now share is our sign of hope that the light of Christ will break upon our darkness and set us free.