

"Conversion and the Man born Blind"

Homily of March 10, 2002

by Fr. Gerry Murphy

The blind man went and washed, and came back able to see

Why do you think Jesus healed the blind man in our gospel story today in this roundabout kind of way? What's all this making a paste from mud and saliva about? And then rubbing it into the blind man's eyes and ordering him to go and wash. Why didn't Jesus simply lay his hands on the blind man and cure him instantly as was his practice in so many of his other healings? I think on the face of it Jesus simply didn't want to jolt the blind man into suddenly seeing. After all this was a man who was blind from birth. But perhaps at a deeper level Jesus wanted the blind man to be part of his own healing process. Jesus certainly willed that his sight would be restored, but it could not, in this instance, be brought to completion until the blind man went off and washed his eyes. I think there is something very sensitive and insightful about this approach to healing.

God wills our healing, our transformation and the inner conversion of our hearts, but we need to be open to and a part of our own healing process, for it to be brought to completion. Where in my life do I need to go away, wash and in some way be cleansed, liberated and given new sight? - new eyes, if you will, not only to see but to perceive; to understand what it means to be a whole and healthy human being in relationship with others, with God and with the natural world that I rely on for my very survival.

This Lent, as you know, the theme our parish has adopted for reflection is that of conversion. I like to think of conversion as an invitation to take stock of our lives so as to consider ways in which we need to change and grow. It means giving time for self-reflection and perhaps asking ourselves some hard questions. One key question I suggest might be: are there any blind spots in my moral living? - areas in my life where, perhaps, I deny or have rationalized my moral failure? Could it be that I have an addiction of one kind or another, but my attitude is: well, it's O.K., nothing to get too concerned about because nobody gets hurt. Or if I am quite wealthy, is my attitude: I've worked hard all my life to acquire all that I own - why should I share it with anyone else? And so on.

A popular dictum or catchphrase often heard today is: You are what you eat. Now while it can be taken to an extreme, I do believe there is some truth and wisdom in this saying. If we persist in eating only junk food we will certainly gain weight and our

bodies will suffer. Just like if we continually put low-grade fuel into our cars, they will eventually become sluggish and will under-perform.

Now, if what we feed our bodies affects our physical well being and health, then, does it not follow that what we feed our minds, our hearts, our spirits and our eyes will determine the state of our spiritual health? What am I reading? What am I listening to? What am I watching on T.V? How much time do I spend on the Internet? Which sites do I visit there?

Is what I watch, listen to, read, and interact with, helping me to grow and flourish spiritually? Or is what I watch, listen to, read and interact with, corroding my dignity and freedom as a child of God? Am I allowing my seeing and perception of reality to be undermined and impaired by a media and advertising industry that cares little for my spiritual well being? These are some of the questions, I believe, we need to ask ourselves, as we contemplate the meaning of conversion and transformation in our lives.

Lord Jesus, as we continue our Lenten journey of conversion, renew the gifts of your Spirit in us, so that we may be fed and led by your wisdom, your truth and your love. Renew in us a deep hunger for the life and freedom that only your word and the sacrament of your body and blood can give us. Lord, help us not to misuse our time and talents. Free us from all that keeps us from joyfully living our baptismal promises, so that we may join with all Christians in the Easter celebration of your resurrection.
Amen