

## The Deacon's Bench



# The Fourth Sunday of Lent: *From Darkness to Light*

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Reflections  
on Sacred  
Scripture

The Gospel readings for the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Sundays of Lent hold a unique and important place in the Church's life because they are intrinsically connected to the Scrutinies celebrated with the Elect preparing for Baptism at the Easter Vigil. These Gospel passages reveal Christ as the one who satisfies human thirst (or longing), heals spiritual blindness (ignorance), and raises humanity from death. This is to prepare the Elect who will be baptized, and all of us, the entire Church, for rebirth at Easter. Today, the Fourth Sunday of Lent we encounter the story of the 'Man Born Blind.'

As is the case of all three Gospel passages used for the Scrutinies, today's pericope about blindness and sight/darkness and light is from the Gospel of John (9: 1-41). John's is a mystical Gospel with many layers of meaning. These meanings give rise to a variety of interpretations, or perhaps better, a variety of understandings. How do we understand this today, in our circumstances?

The Man Born Blind experienced physical blindness. Curing him was an act both of mercy and of bold self-identification. Through it Jesus is proclaiming, "I am the Light of the World." The man has been helpless and dependent all his life. There is no mention here of the blind man asking for a cure, he is simply present, an opportunity for Jesus to demonstrate the truth – blindness is not a punishment for sin, no physical ailment is a punishment for sin. The mercy of God is boundless, and Jesus himself enlightens us.

A different kind of blindness prevailed among Jesus' opposition, the Pharisees. Even though Jesus held many things in common with them (including, critically, belief in the resurrection of the dead) they most often had opinions at odds with one another. The devout and pious followers of this Jewish sect sometimes became caught up in the minutia of the Law of Moses. Their focus on legal details and the accretion of religious tradition sometimes blinded them to real human need. They had become religious leaders who were blinded to the will of God for his people. Thus, we have the irony of physical blindness being healed while spiritual blindness increases among religious authorities.

Today's Scrutiny for the Elect and for all of us is a confrontation with ignorance, false certainty, and the inability to recognize truth. Jesus, the light of the world, is the cure for this blindness. He shows us the way. For hearts open to the Light of Christ, we pray together in the Prayer After Communion today:

*O God, who enlighten everyone who comes into this world,  
illuminate our hearts, we pray,  
with the splendor of your grace,  
that we may always ponder  
what is worthy and pleasing to your majesty  
and love you in all sincerity.  
Through Christ our Lord.*