

'Surely we are not also blind ...are we?'

Once upon a time, there was a 37-year-old fellow named Jack Abbott. He wrote a book called **In the Belly of the Beast**. Since the age of 12, Jack Abbott spent all but one year of his life, either in reform schools, or in prisons. Over half of those years were spent in solitary confinement. One of the worst 'solitary' experiences was the so-called 'Black-out Cell.' Jack describes it this way:

'It was total darkness. Not a crack of light entered the cell.... Darkness was absolute; it was like being in ink. The only light I saw ...was when I closed my eyes. Then, there was, before me, a vivid burst of brilliant color ...like fireworks! When I opened my eyes, it would vanish. My eyes hungered for light & color, the way one's mouth hungers for saliva & moisture'

Now, compare Abbott's experience of 'loss of sight' to the experience of Bill Evans, who after being blind from birth ...for 51 years, 'received sight' through a miraculous operation. Describing how it felt to see for the first time, Bill Evans says:

'It's the most amazing thing in the world....'

I can't wait to get up each day—to see what I can see. Everything is like a constant high.'

I share these two, **true** stories with you... because they give us an insight into how the blind man in today's Gospel, of whom I just read to you from St. John, must have felt when Jesus restored **his** sight.

He, too, probably hungered for light & color the way a mouth hungers for saliva/moisture.

He, too, must have thought the gift of sight was the most amazing thing in the world.

He, too, probably couldn't wait to get up each day – 'to see what he could see.'

BUT ...the blind man's miracle of sight was **nothing** compared to the 2nd miracle Jesus worked for him that day. **Just, what, exactly, was the 2nd miracle that day, you ask.**

Well, I am glad you asked that question!

The 2nd miracle that Jesus worked for him that day was the miracle of his **SPIRITUAL** sight = the wonderful **gift of faith!**

Note well: the author of this gospel, St. John, implies that the **gift of faith** takes place **gradually**, not all at once. Actually, John describes the blind man's faith in 3 stages:

1st Stage comes when some people ask him about his cure. He replies:

'The man called 'Jesus' made clay, anointed my eyes, and told me to 'Go to Siloam and wash.' I went there, washed ...and am able to see.'

And so, the blind man's **1st** perception of Jesus is that he **is a man** – a remarkable **man**, **but...** just a **man!**

2nd Stage comes when the Pharisees quiz him. They ask him:

'What do you have to say about Jesus, since he opened your eyes?'

The man replies:

He is a prophet.

So, the blind man's understanding of Jesus is growing. Actually, his spiritual vision of Jesus takes a giant leap forward. Apparently, the more he thinks about what happened, the more convinced he becomes that Jesus is **more than** just a remarkable **man**. He must be a ...**Prophet!**

3rd Stage comes later that day, when the blind man meets Jesus, again, face to face. Jesus looks ‘deep’ into the man’s eyes and says:

‘Do you believe in the Son of Man?’

He answers,

‘Who is he, sir that I may believe in him?’

Jesus responds,

‘You have seen him ...and the one speaking with you ...is he.

‘I do believe, Lord,’

...the man replies and he falls on his knees before Jesus.

And so, the man’s spiritual vision of Jesus takes its 3rd and final, leap forward.

He perceives Jesus to be more than **a man.**

He perceives Jesus to be more than **a prophet.**

He perceives Jesus, now, to be **the LORD!**

Consequently, the man’s spiritual sight, his **gift of faith**, is far more miraculous than even his gift of physical sight.

BUT...before we wax too eloquently about the blind man’s **gift of faith** in Jesus, let’s just pause to ponder how much we have **in common** with the **blind man**.

Before we were washed in the waters of baptism, we were spiritually blind, just like the man-born-blind in the gospel.

BUT...after we were anointed and washed in the waters specified by Jesus, we experienced the miracle of spiritual sight ...or **faith in Jesus!**

Yet, there is still another similarity we share with the man-born-blind, perhaps even more revealing. It is that... our gift of faith in Jesus didn’t come all at once for us, either. It, too, came gradually, in stages.

For example, when we were small, the first ‘picture’ we had of Jesus was that of a man –a remarkable man, but still only a man.

As we grew older, our perception of Jesus also grew ...with Communionwith Confirmation ...with life itself.

And... our perception of Jesus continues to grow to this day, regardless of how old we are.

One of the exciting things about Jesus is that, the older one gets, the more one learns about him. And the more we learn about him, the more remarkable he becomes.

In other relationships, it is usually quite the opposite. The more we learn about a person, the more we become aware of his or her shortcomings. And, often, we decide to continue in the relationship in spite of the ‘frailties,’ warts and all, so to speak.

This is not the case with our Jesus. The more we learn about him, the more exciting and glorious he becomes. We are thrilled to stay in the relationship, not in spite of ‘frailties,’

BUT...because of the deeper vision and understanding ...of his boundless love!

You have received this wonderful gift of faith in baptism. Enjoy it. Cherish it. Nurture it. You only go around once. With the eyes of faith, keep trying to get it right. (He **is** a God of 2nd chances!) Then, one day, you will wake up in heaven in the arms of Jesus ...surrounded by family and friends, finally understanding everything. And all you will be able to say is:

‘WOW!’

May Almighty God, our Abba, bless you, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen