

"He said, 'I DO believe, Lord.' And he worshiped him."

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Once upon a time, there was a man named, John Howard Griffin, a white man & a Convert, who wrote a book entitled, **'Black Like Me.'** It was made into a movie, with James Witmore playing Griffin. The book and movie are the result of John's experience, as he traveled throughout the South during the turbulent 60's, the days of Civil Rights activism. I knew Griffin, personally. He was a great humanitarian, who wanted to learn, first-hand, and then to report: what it was like being a black man in the South in those days. He turned his skin black by taking chemicals, using creams, & a sun light at great personal risk to his health.

What few know about John Griffin is that, during WWII, he was blinded by an airplane explosion. For the next 12 years, he couldn't see a thing. Then, one day, walking down the street, he began seeing 'red sand' in front of his eyes. Without warning, his sight returned. A specialist said the blockage of the blood to the optic nerve had been opened, giving him his sight again.

Commenting on the experience, John said,

"You don't know what it is for a father to see his children for the first time. They were much more beautiful... than I ever suspected."

That dramatic episode in John Griffin's life gives us a deeper appreciation of the story I/Deacon just read to you from the Gospel of St. John. It supplies us with a better idea of how a man-born-blind felt ...when he was, miraculously, cured by Jesus.

But, there's a 2nd, even more spectacular miracle that takes place in the story of the blind man.

"What, exactly, is that 2nd, more spectacular miracle in the story of the blind man?" you ask.

Well, I am glad you asked that question!

It's the miracle of faith, or **'spiritual sight,'** that Jesus confers upon the man.

It's this 2nd miracle, the **gift of faith**, which enables the man to fall to his knees and address Jesus as, **"Lord."** It is this 2nd miracle that St. John stresses in today's Gospel. So, we will, now, take a closer look at it.

1st thing that we notice about this miracle (of faith) is that it takes place gradually; not all at once! It 'tickles the soul,' so to speak, to be a bit poetic.

For example, the man's **1st impression of Jesus** is to regard him as just another **man**. Asked about his 'baffling cure,' he says:

"The MAN, called Jesus, made some clay and anointed my eyes and told me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' So, I went there and washed and... was able to see."

The man's first impression of Jesus is that he is a **man**, albeit a remarkable man.

His **2nd impression of Jesus** comes when he is questioned by the Pharisees. They ask him:

"You say Jesus cured you of your blindness –well, what do you say about him?"

"He is a prophet," the man replies.

Note, this time, the man's perception of Jesus has undergone a giant leap forward. Apparently, the more time he has had to think about what has happened, the more convinced he is that Jesus is more than just another **man**. He is a **prophet!**

And this brings me to the man's **3rd impression of Jesus**. It is later in the day that the man again meets-up with Jesus. Jesus looks, the 'once-blind-man,' straight in the eyes and asks him:

"Do you believe in the Son of Man?"
"Tell me who he is, sir, so I can believe in him!" he answers.

“You have already seen him ...and he is the one... who is talking... with... you... now.”

The man falls to his knees before Jesus, bows his head, and whispers:

“I believe, Lord”

And so, the man’s **3rd impression of Jesus** takes one, final leap forward. Now, he perceives Jesus to be more than a mere **man**, more than a **prophet**. He is the **Lord**... before whom:

“...all beings in heaven, on earth, and in the world below will fall on their knees.” Phil. 2:10

Consequently, the man’s gift of faith, or **‘spiritual sight,’** is even more miraculous than his gift of physical sight or some material gift!

However, lest we wax too eloquently about the blind man’s gift of faith, we would be wise to recall that, we, too, have similarities to him, as we received this same gift of faith from Jesus at our own baptism...the vows of which we will renew on Easter.

You see, before we were washed in the waters of baptism, we, too, were **“spiritually blind.”** It was part of the **‘spiritual DNA,’** so to speak, which we inherited from Adam, via Original Sin.

BUT, after we washed in the waters of baptism, Jesus became much more to us. He became someone deeply personal to us.

Now, the **2nd** similarity between us and the blind man in today’s Gospel. Besides receiving the gift of faith, as he did, we also grew, gradually, in our perception of Jesus, as he did.

For example, the picture we had of Jesus when we were very young was, probably, that he was most extraordinary, very special. **BUT**, as we matured, our perception of Jesus has ‘focused’ and matured with us.

Eventually, our ongoing perception of Jesus reached its present, richest form. We perceive him to be what he truly is: ever-present in the Eucharist, the sacrifice & sacrament of our daily altar, the ... Son of God!

The exciting thing about Jesus is –the more we learn about him, the more there is to learn. In other relationships, it is often a sad fact that the more we learn about a person, the more we become aware of that person’s shortcomings ... **‘warts and all,’** as they say.

BUT...and there’s that proverbial **BUT** in life, again. This is not the case with Jesus. The more we grow in our knowledge of him, the more spectacular and glorious he becomes!

I now close, paraphrasing the great Albert Schweitzer, who gave up his career as a world-famous and renowned concert pianist, who returned to ‘university,’ became a medical doctor, and then spent the rest of his life serving as a ‘medical-missionary-doctor’ in darkest Africa. The highly, spiritually motivated Schweitzer writes:

“Jesus comes to us as one unknown, as he did long ago to the apostles on the seashore.

He speaks to us the same three words he spoke to them:

‘Come, follow me!’

And, to those who accept his invitation, whether they be wise or simple, young or old, he will reveal himself to them ...in their toils and in their sufferings.

And they shall learn through their own experience -- who ...he ...is.”

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