

**The Spit of Jesus and the Man Born Blind
(4th Sunday of Lent, Year A [Optional for B, C])**

1 Samuel 16:1, 6-7, 10-13—The Anointing of King David

1. David is the “anointed” (Hebrew *mashiah*): with “oil” and the “Spirit” of God

Psalm 23—The Lord is My Shepherd

1. A Psalm of David the King: “You anoint my head with oil...”

Ephesians 5:8-14—Arise from the Dead, and Christ will Give You Light

1. Baptism: “Once you were in darkness, now you are light in the Lord” (5:8)
2. New Life: “Walk” as “children of light” = do what is “good, right, and true” (5:8)

John 9:1-41—The Healing of the Man Born Blind

1. Sin and Suffering: “Who sinned, this man or his parents?” (9:2)
 - a. Neither this man *nor* his parents sinned (cf. John 5:14)
2. The Miracle (John 9:1-7)
 - a. Jesus declares: “I am the *light of the world*”
 - b. Jesus *spits* on the ground and *makes* “*clay*” for the man’s eyes (Why *spit*?!)
 - c. Jesus commands the man to *wash* in the pool of Siloam
- 3 The Response (John 9:8-23)
 - a. Confusion: Is this the same man?
 - b. Accusation: Jesus is a “sinner” who breaks the Sabbath (cf. Genesis 1)
 - c. Disbelief: the “Jews/Judeans (Greek *Ioudaioi*) do not believe
4. The Faith of the Man Born Blind: true sight and true blindness (John 9:24-41)
5. Dead Sea Scrolls: Man was made from “spat saliva, molded clay” (1QS 11:22)
6. The “Signs” of Jesus and the Sacraments:

Pope St. Leo the Great: “What was visible in our Savior has passed over into his mysteries [=sacraments]” (*Sermon* 74.2)

Visible Miracles of Jesus

Healing of Man Born Blind
(John 10)



Invisible Miracles of Sacraments

Baptism
(Forgiveness of Original Sin, New Creation)

Living Tradition: the Sacrament of Baptism

St. Ambrose of Milan (4th cent. A.D.): “In one instant we see the power of [Jesus’] divinity and the strength of his holiness. As the divine light, he touched this man and enlightened him; as priest, by an action symbolizing baptism he wrought in him his work of redemption. *The only reason for his mixing clay with the spittle and smearing it on the eyes of the blind man was to remind you that he who restored the man to health by anointing his eyes with clay is the very one who fashioned the first man out of clay, and this clay that is our flesh can receive the light of eternal life through the sacrament of baptism. You too, should come to Siloam... Let Christ wash you and then you will see.*

Come and be baptized, it is time; come quickly, and you too will be able to say... “I was blind, and now I see...” (*Letter* 80:1-5; trans. E. Barnecut)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (4th Sunday of Lent, Year A)

1. Even though we are in the year of Matthew’s Gospel (Year A), the Church inserts the story of the Man Born Blind from John’s Gospel into the 4th Sunday of Lent. She also gives priests the option of preaching on it *every year* during Lent. Why? What is the connection between this Scripture passage and the Catechumens preparing to receive the sacrament of Baptism?

2. In the account of the miracle, Jesus emphasizes the difference between physical blindness and spiritual blindness. In the word of the Catechism, those who “pretend not to need salvation” are “blind to themselves” (CCC 588). Where do you see spiritual blindness in the world today? Where can you identify it in your own life?

3. Have you ever thought of Baptism before as the sacrament of “illumination” or “spiritual sight” (CCC 1216)? What are the most common ways baptism is explained in the Church today, and how can the miracle of the Man Born Blind help us understand better what is happening in the sacrament of Baptism?

For Further Study

1. Brant Pitre, *The Seven Mysteries of Jesus: A Bible Study on the Seven Sacraments* (CD Bible Study, available at CatholicProductions.com. In this set, I study the connection between the visible miracles of Jesus’ public ministry and the invisible miracles of the sacraments.
2. Scott Hahn, “Temple, Sign, and Sacrament: Towards a New Perspective on the Gospel of John, *Letter & Spirit* 4 (2008): 107-143.
3. Edith Barnecut, *Journey with the Fathers: Commentaries on the Sunday Gospels Year A*. New York: New City Press, 1992, pp. 42-43.