

**6th Sunday of Pascha – The Blind Man**  
**(John 9: 1-38)**

Last week, The Sunday of the Samaritan Woman, my homily explored 'Listening' and how St Photini truly listened and responded to our Lord. Now, this is going to look as though week by week I am going to explore the five recognised senses; rest assured I am not, although this homily does look at sight (no pun intended!)

Before reading further may I encourage you to read the appointed gospel reading for this the 6th Sunday of Pascha – please see the second attachment document.

When you look at the following, what do you see?



If your sight is anything like mine, you will not see anything very clearly at all!

It has been said that the eye doesn't see. The brain sees. The eye just transmits. So, what we see isn't only determined by what comes through the eye. What we see is affected by our memories, our feelings and by what we have seen before.

I wonder what you see when you look at today's gospel reading; Jesus walks up to a man, blind from birth, rubs clay into his eyes, restoring his sight, and then keeps on walking. The neighbours of the formerly blind man are not sure what they see, (v8-9) "...*Is not this he who sat and begged?*". *Some said, "This is he." Others said, "He is like him."* Some of the Pharisees see Jesus as a sinner, "This Man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath." (v16). Others ask, "*How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?*"

One of the things I see, when I look at this gospel story, is a similarity with the story of Naaman; as recorded in the Old Testament (2 Kings: 5). "*Now Naaman, commander of the army of Syria, was a great and honourable man in the eyes of his master, because by him the Lord gave victory to Syria: The man was mighty in strength and valour, but a leper.*" (2 Kgs. 5:1) Naaman is told, that there was in Samaria a prophet who could cleanse him of his dread disease. And so Naaman journeyed to the house of the prophet Elisha. There, arrayed with his horses and servants, his chariots and wealth, Naaman sought deliverance from his Leprosy. The scriptures tell us that in response to Naaman's request, Elisha sent out a messenger, saying: "*Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.*" (2 Kgs. 5:10).

This simple act —immersing himself in the Jordan River seven times—was so undramatic that Naaman was offended and refused to comply. The account continues: "*But Naaman was wrath, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage.*" (2 Kgs. 5:11–12.). Eventually

Naaman was cleansed but only after humbling himself before God and man by complying with the prophet's instructions.

Here again we have parallels with St Paul's conversion experience on the road to Damascus. The Book of Acts says that whilst Paul was on his way from Jerusalem to Syrian Damascus with a mandate issued by the High Priest to seek out and arrest followers of Jesus, "suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." When Paul got up from the ground, he opened his eyes and found he could see nothing. For three days he was blind and did not eat or drink anything. — *Acts 9:3–9, NIV*

The account continues with a description of Ananias of Damascus receiving a divine revelation instructing him to visit Saul at the house of Judas and there lay hands on him to restore his sight. Ananias, initially reluctant, obeys the divine command and Saul's sight is restored.

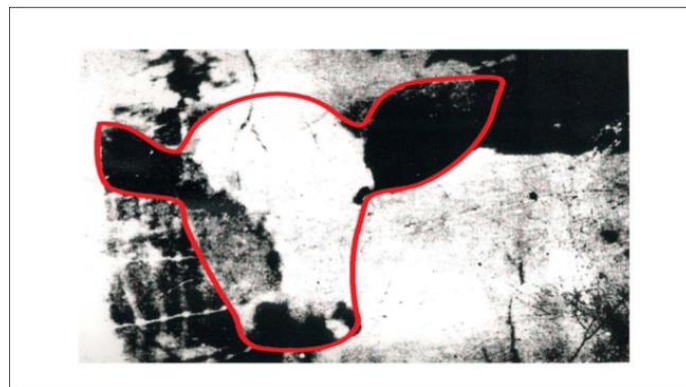
Here is what I see to be a common thread: The Clay placed in the eyes of the blind man was used, not because Jesus needed it, but because the blind man needed it. Immersion in the Jordan was not necessary for healing from Leprosy, nor the laying on of hands to cure blindness. However, Naaman needed to submit to immersion and St Paul, to the laying on of hands by Ananias. Each of these persons is treated, by the Divine Presence, in full knowledge of their personal uniqueness.

We are, each of us, unique, with our own distinctive concerns, our own needs, our own issues. And our Lord, fully understands that; He meets us where we are! He meets the need of each one of us with wisdom, with compassion and with love.

The Blind man, Naaman and St Paul, are distinct and unique persons each encountering the Lord God in a way that was needed for them. It was the intention of Jesus to restore not only the man's physical eyes, but even more to awaken his spiritual sight. It was our Lord's intention to heal Naaman of his dreadful disease, but also to humble him that he might be drawn closer to Him. It was our Lord's intention not only to restore the sight of Saul, but to build him up again as St Paul.

As we continue to move ever closer to the Feast of Pentecost, let us remember that as we celebrate the coming of the Lord, the Holy Spirit, this feast also celebrates the full revelation of the divine Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The One true God, who longs to meet us where we are, to be "a resplendent light to those who stumble in darkness", and to draw us ever closer that our unique needs may be met with wisdom, love and compassion.

Oh, and going back to the picture,....



... now what do you see!