

## The Solemn Reproaches of Good Friday

**Response:** O my people, what have I done to you, or how have I offended you? Answer me.

**Verse:** I led you out of the land of Egypt, yet you have prepared a cross for me. **R.**

**Verse:** I led you through the desert for forty years, fed you with manna, and brought you into a land exceeding good, but you have prepared a cross for me. **R.**

**Verse:** What more ought I to have done for you that I have not done? I planted you, indeed, my most beautiful vineyard, and you have become exceeding bitter to me, and in my thirst, you gave me vinegar to drink, and with a spear you have pierced my side. **R.**

**Verse:** For your sake, I scourged the firstborn of Egypt, yet you have given me up to be scourged. **R.**

**Verse:** I led you out of Egypt, having drowned Pharaoh in the Red Sea, yet you have delivered me to the chief priests. **R.**

**Verse:** I opened the sea before you, but you have opened my side with a spear. **R.**

**Verse:** I went before you in a pillar of cloud, yet you have led me to the judgment hall of Pilate. **R.**

**Verse:** I fed you with manna in the desert, yet you have assaulted me with blows and scourges. **R.**

**Verse:** I gave you the water of salvation from the rock, but you have given me gall and vinegar to drink. **R.**

**Verse:** For your sake I struck the kings of the Canaanites, but you have struck my head with a reed. **R.**

**Verse:** I gave you a royal scepter, but you have given me a crown of thorns. **R.**

**Verse:** I exalted you with great strength, yet you have hanged me on the tree of the cross. **R.**

**All:** Holy God! Holy Mighty One! Holy and immortal One, have mercy on us!

## The man born blind John 9:1-41,

1. The relationship between sin and suffering. God has a purpose in allowing this man to be born blind, but it is not the result of his own personal sin or that of his parents.
2. Jesus declares, "I am the light of the world." There is an interplay between light and dark throughout John's Gospel.
3. Note the way that Jesus performs the miracle. Three key elements:
  - Jesus makes a statement about his own identity as the light of the world.
  - Jesus doesn't just speak as in other miracles. He deliberately spits on the ground and makes clay out of the dust and the spit and uses the the clay to anoint the man's eyes.
  - Jesus doesn't just spit and make clay; he also commands the man to wash with water.

Why the spit? Go to the Old Testament. it lies in the Jewish roots of Jesus's action here. In first-century Judaism, when God made Adam from the dust of the ground, he used spittle. The Jews had this tradition that when God made Adam, he made him from spit and clay. A line in the Dead Sea Scrolls says Adam (or man) was made from "spat saliva, molded clay." Jesus is acting as God acted in the Old Testament, a divine action. He is performing an act of a new creation. Often in John's Gospel, Jesus is revealing his divinity. He is not just the Messiah. He is not just the king of Israel. He is the divine son of God. He is I am, the God who made the universe and who is now going to remake the universe and redeem it.

### The response to the miracle?

- Some people are confused – a doppelgänger in German.
- Jesus heals on the Sabbath, an echo of creation in the book of Genesis 1.
- Finally, "the Jews did not believe." The literal Greek word is Ioudaios, or Judeans. In John, there is conflict between the Judeans in the South and the Galileans in the North.
- The Pharisees and the leaders there repeat the same mistake of the disciples, saying, "You were born in utter sin."

**Note the progression of the blind man's faith.** When he first meets Jesus, there is no indication he knows who He is at all. After he is healed, he calls Jesus a **prophet**. When he gets into an exchange with the Pharisees and the Judeans, he calls Jesus a **man sent from God**. Finally, when he encounters Jesus for the second time he says, "**Lord** (kyrios) **I believe!**" And he worshiped him. He comes to the fullness of faith in Jesus's identity as the Lord, as divine, as the One who made the heavens and the earth.

Once the blind man gives his confession of faith, Jesus gives his final pronouncement, "**For judgment I came to this world so that those who do not see may see, and so that those who do see may become blind.**"

Jesus is teaching the difference between true sight and true blindness. See, the Pharisees think that blindness is physical blindness, but Jesus reveals that true blindness is the inability to see that he has come from God, and that he is in fact the Savior of the world.

The blind man sees far more clearly who Jesus is.

Jesus is saying the blindness that we should be afraid of, that we should avoid, is the spiritual blindness that would keep us from seeing who he is and the actions of God in his life and in his ministry and in his miracles.



## The meaning for us:

The miracles of Jesus point forward to what he's going to accomplish in the sacraments.

Pope St. Leo the Great: **"What was visible in our Savior [what was visible in Jesus' public ministry], has passed over into his mysteries."** The ancient Christians referred to the sacraments as the mysteries.

The visible miracle of Jesus healing the man born blind points forward to the invisible miracle of what he's going to accomplish in one of the sacraments, and all the ancient Church Fathers agree that it's the sacrament of Baptism. In ancient Christianity, the name for the sacrament of **Baptism** was the sacrament of **Illumination** or **Enlightenment**, spiritual illumination to be able to see the truths of faith through the gift of faith.

The spiritual blindness of the man is like a sign or a symbol of Original Sin, the state into which we are born. It's not the result of our own personal sin or that of our parents. It is a result of the original fall of Adam and Eve. It's not an actual sin for which we are culpable. It's a state into which we are born, just like the man born blind. For Children, we often say Original Sin is like a stain on your soul that gets wiped away when you are baptized. Fine for a child, but it's incorrect Original Sin is not some thing, like a stain, it is an absence of something, like the absence of sight. It's the loss of the original holiness and the original grace that our first parents had when they were created by God in communion with him, in perfect communion with him, before the fall. Baptism restores us to that state of original innocence. When you sin, you lose that state of original holiness, so sacramental confession is required to restore it.

The man born blind represents all of us born into a state of Original Sin, and then Jesus, the Savior, comes to restore our sight.

When Jesus takes his spit and gives sight to the man eyes who was born without sight, he's inaugurating a new creation, because Baptism makes us into a new creation. The one who made the world, the one who made Adam, now makes us anew and gives us sight, not to see earthly realities, it is not about restoring physical sight to us, it's about giving us supernatural sight so that we can see the truths of faith and the mysteries of faith, especially the mystery of his incarnation, that God has become man out of love for humanity.

During Lent, the Church is preparing the catechumens to receive that grace of illumination, the sight that they will receive in the washing of the water in the font of Baptism.

St. Paul writes this in Ephesians 5 (the second reading for Cycle A):

For once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is a shame even to speak of the things that they do in secret; but when anything is exposed by the light it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it is said, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light."

Before baptism, the Ephesians, who were pagans, walked not in physical blindness, but in the spiritual darkness of sin. Now that they are baptized, they are to walk as children of light, doing what is good and right and true and avoiding sin, avoiding the works of darkness, avoiding the shameful works that they had in their former life as pagans, living lives of immorality and drunkenness and all kinds of sins that were part of the pagan culture.