

Week 6: The Sacred Encounter: Return to God

Gospels:

Mark 14:1 - 15:47 Passion according to Mark

John 9:1 - 41 The Man Born Blind

As we near the end of our Lenten pilgrimage, we are invited to contemplate the mystery of God at the heart of Christian experience. Each step on the journey brings forth more questions, for example: what is the nature of suffering. This week we explore the Passion of Jesus as told by Mark, and the story of the blind man from John's gospel.

The man born blind has a sacred encounter with Jesus near the pool of Siloam. It relates a message of faith; a faith, which is seen to grow and deepen as life happens. Our own journey of faith is affected by our life experience. Jesus saw the blind man in a way that others could not. Likewise, Jesus' approaches each of us with knowledge of our whole life history because love seeks to understand better, the one who is loved.

As the blind man was on his way to wash in the pool of Siloam at Jesus' command I wonder if he stopped and thought to himself, 'what am I doing, no one has ever heard of a man born blind being healed of his blindness. Who am I kidding.' Maybe he stopped many times before reaching the pool, but because he felt inner stirrings stimulated by a man called Jesus, he could not help but his satisfy the curiosity.

Simon of Cyrene has a sacred encounter with Jesus on the road to Calvary. We don't know if Simon became a Christian. But we do know he was forced to walk the journey to Calvary beside a humiliated, battered and bruised Jesus, a man he has never seen before. Simon is unaware of the message of faith he is witnessing. He only sees a calculated, brutal and agonising death by someone unable to defend himself. But this is the story that demonstrated the wisdom of God, waiting to be recognised. Divine wisdom is not a manual of common sense and practical advice. Rather it is the message of unconditional, radical self-emptying love, sacrificial living and dying of Jesus through which we learn a core message of our faith: God is greater than any suffering, God is redemptive love.

In these sacred encounters of a blind man cured, a man put to death, in bread broken and wine shared, the cross as our emblem, we recognise the start of a new freedom, a call for us to live, not by massing goods and achievement, but by graciousness and generosity which manifest the power of God.

We undertake the Lenten journey each year in order to grow in our faith. Each one of us is at a different place in our faith journey as we make this pilgrimage. Together we become the light of Christ in this world: a light, which helps to guide others to seek a sacred encounter, to know and love Jesus as he truly is. Somewhere in our faith tradition is the belief that suffering is something that may be learned from, strangely embraced and somehow turned to profound significance.

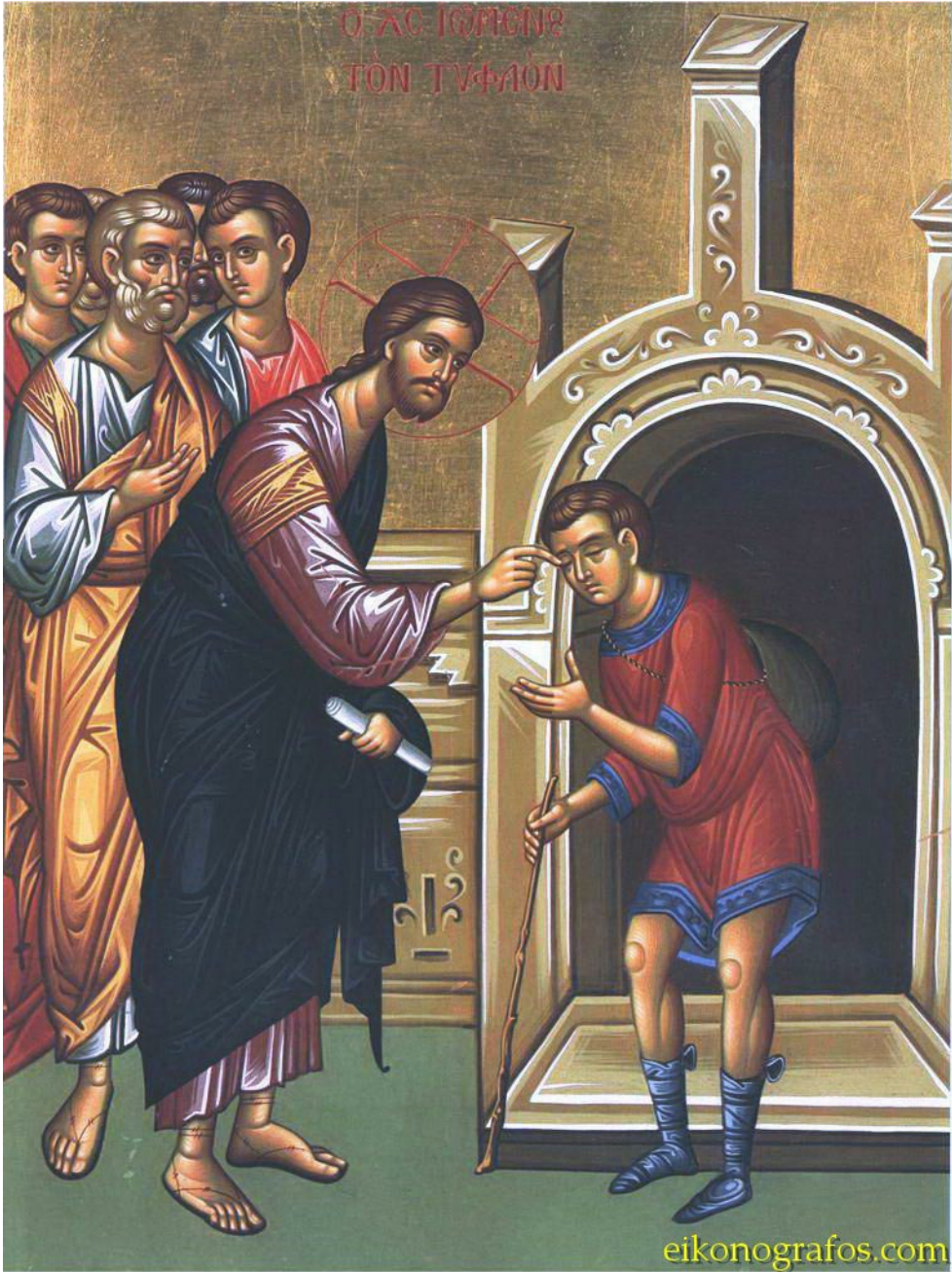
The ebb and flow of the pilgrim journey finally gives way to the proximity of our chosen destination. To this sacred place, we have come to seek some form of encounter with Divinity. In ways that demonstrate the love of God for everyone, we can be life-long pilgrims, constantly seeking renewal and transformation in the light of the resurrection of Jesus.

May we be always ready to give up what we cannot keep in order to gain what we cannot lose. Alleluia!

Discussion Starters:

1. As we enter Holy Week, what emerges for us as we contemplate its significance in our own pilgrimage to Calvary?
2. How is the saving pattern of death and resurrection of Jesus finding expression in our lives?
3. What questions am I bringing as I stand before the Cross this Easter, and what form of renewal is asked of me as result of my pilgrimage experience?
4. What people, networks, ideas, insights have I discovered that will continue to inspire me?

Healing the Man Born Blind



Great Traveller

by Joyce Rupp

Great Traveller,
you beguile two crest-fallen disciples
on the road to Emmaus;
you draw them in
with your arrowed questions,
urge them to turn the story over,
to recall each piece of it,
although you already know
the disturbing memory.
You speak your golden words,
softening the travellers' sadness,
revealing what their hearts
yearn to believe: life thrives beyond death.
Slowly their sagging spirits
rouse with recognition allured by the faint scent
of your prevailing presence.

“Stay! Stay! Stay with us!”

And you do.

You break bread with them,
and when the lamp of love
flames high, you rise quietly
and gently slip away.

Joy washes over past bewilderment,
propels the disciples outward.
They go, carrying a taste of love,
a voice of hope, a word of comfort
to those waiting
in the wounded harbour of disbelief.

Now, after the closeness of prayer,
I, too, go out,
carrying the flaming heart of communion,
go to embrace you, the Great Traveller,
through the integrity of my life,
go to carry the lighted lamp of Love in me,
out and beyond, into the heart of a world
where the same Lamp shines vividly for all to see.



‘Crucifixion’ by Richard Campbell
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A Reflection for Pilgrims:

Take some time to gather wisdom for
the continuing journey:

What captured my attention?

What surprised me?

What moved me?

What changed me?

What is my hope for me

and for my faith community?

What will I take home?