

St Pius & St Anthony 4th Sunday Lent Homily 2026 Year A John 9:1-41

The Pharisees give us a good question to pray over ourselves in Lent, when they ask Jesus, “***Surely we are not also blind, are we?***” (Jn 9:40) I don’t know if they are serious about conversion or self-scrutiny or not, but we will also hear the apostles similarly check themselves at the Last Supper in Matthew’s passion account on Palm Sunday reading too, when Jesus announces His betrayal by one of them, and the apostles, each, will say to Jesus “one after another, “***Surely it is not I, Lord?***” (Matt 26:22). Jesus lets the question hang in the air, until after even Judas responds, before Jesus leaves it at, “You’ve said so” (Mt 26:25). Not convincing, and not any sign of true conversion. So we can pick it up as an examination of our own walk with Him – Are we blind too? Do we see things as Jesus sees them? Or do we see what we want to, and then rashly judge and condemn others because of our blindness? I confess I’ve been there! *I think I see everything right, and then turn out to be so wrong!* If not completely blind, I’m sure we all suffer at times from blind spots that obscure our vision and lead us to unjustly condemn others. The Pharisees certainly serve as good examples of this sinful injustice in today’s gospel. I notice that every time the Pharisees open their mouths in this reading, they are self-righteously condemning others’ sins (without considering their own error or sin – quick to pick out/on others, instead of checking their own selves). First, in Jn 9:16, they say, “this man not from God-he’s a sinner” referring to Jesus. Then in Jn 9:24, they proclaim “We know this man is sinner”, and then attacking the healed man himself, in Jn 9:34, saying, “You are born totally in sin and you trying to teach us....”(further show of their judgmental self-righteousness is seen in 9:22 & 34 which tells of the Pharisees condemning & throwing people out of the synagogue-them determining who is in & who is out!)

Jesus’ response to their attempt (if serious) to examine themselves gives anyone wanting to be better, a lot to think about: “*If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you are claim, ‘We see,’ so your sin remains*” (Jn 9:41) It is the arrogant and presumptive claim ‘I see’ as in ‘I know everything’, that sets us up to fall into sin. (*1 Corinthians 10:12 “whoever thinks he is standing secure should beware, not to fall.”*) This is the same thought as Jesus taught earlier in Matt 7:5, “You hypocrite, remove the wooden beam from your eye first; then you will see clearly to remove the splinter from your brother’s eye.” We have to see our own sin first, to be able to claim seeing anything of others’ sins (& knowing ourselves honestly inevitably makes us cautiously wise & charitably prudent when/if we call others out).

Yet, I can’t let pass this most curious detail about the healing of the man born blind: (it’s a detail we may **overlook**) that Jesus makes a mud-paste healing

compound of out of dust and his own saliva! Jesus is giving something of Himself to bring about this man's healing. And how personal and intimate – not just the saliva, but the extra effort of creating a healing salve from the dust too (*usually to get dust in my eyes is a bad thing?*), and then touching the man's eyes by *yes, rubbing it in* – massaging the eyes to know that he really feels it (before sending him on to the pool for washing). It wasn't an instantaneous healing – it was a gradual, multi-step healing. Jesus has healed before by simply 'saying the word', touch or not touch – but here he actually creates an ointment and then applies it to the man. This is unique. We only see Jesus heal someone involving his spit, three times in the gospels. 1) Herein Jn 9:6, and then 2) in Mark 7:33, where Jesus heals a deaf/mute man with spit & touch of his tongue/ears and then 3) another blind man in Mark 8:22-25 with just His spit. Yet, here he creates a spit/dust compound.

This is really something new. I mean that if we step back for a minute and consider that this man moves from blindness to sight, from darkness to light, it all sounds a lot like Genesis again and the story of creation all over-new life! For example, in the First creation account, Genesis 1:2-3 we hear about “**Darkness** over the abyss and a mighty **wind** sweeping over the **waters**—Then God said: Let there be light, and there **was light**” (*remember wind & water*). Then the more detailed second creation account, of man's intro into the world-Genesis 2:6-7 we hear about ‘stream welling up out of the earth and watering all the surface of the ground—then the LORD God formed the man out of the dust of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life’ (*again water wind-breath +dust*) Don't we SEE all the elements of new life in Jesus' gesture of mixing His saliva (what is saliva but water and Spirit-breath- think of spit bubbles of water & air—saliva is living water-bubbling-just as Jesus called himself Living Water in Jn 7:37-38) and adding dust-dirt of our flesh and now we have a scene of being created NEW - using saliva with dust to make over his eyes to see LIGHT and give new Life - new creation! of baptism (& some editions of the Bible such as the NIV translate Jn 9:32 as “*Never since the world began* has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind”) – John's gospel is clearly telling us to think of Genesis here!! The Man is made over New!

(keep in mind too that by gaining sight, this man begins a new life – born into society new, because his earlier blindness had ostracized him from others, as 1)he could not work-dangerous in such manual labor-Jn 9:8 called him a 'beggar' and 2) he wasn't allowed in the Temple, because they labelled him 'unclean' as he couldn't tell what he'd touch – might the have brushed up contact unknowingly to an unclean animal, unclean food or unclean person-leper. So, the blind were just put out – and being healed didn't; just restore sight, but it restored standing again in society!)

But also with saliva, don't we all recall being told of its curative/soothing properties as kids. How many times do we hear about a little child falling and skinning his/her knee and then rushing to his/her mom or dad for them to apply the healing kiss application of saliva and instantly the child is healed (boo-boo all healed). Well, we see the man born blind healed by Jesus' touching kiss (saliva!) What better salve! It is all there with Jesus.

But to wrap up, we can all have our eyes opened and learn, learn from the Pharisees, asking ourselves, "Surely we are not blind?" Well, are we? Do we see as Jesus sees? We want to. But do we truly look upon each other, all of our brothers and sisters, & see them as Jesus sees them? That is our work, examining ourselves