

Homily for Sunday, March 15, 2026

For almost the first four hundred years of the Church's existence only adults were baptized. Apparently, in the Early Church, a person could not be baptized unless they passed a certain litmus test. The litmus test was that they had to know their



way into and their way out of three important stories: the story of the Samaritan woman at the well (last Sunday), the story of the man born blind (today), and the story of Jesus

raising Lazarus from the dead (next Sunday). With the help of catechists, who were a little bit ahead of them, the candidates were led into the story, were led out of the story, and were challenged to apply the story to their own lives. If they were not willing to do this, they were denied baptism and could not join the Church. That's how foundational these three stories were. That's why we're here every weekend, not to listen to me drone on, but to grow in our faith slowly and progressively. Faith is not just knowledge or memorizing the Creed; it's experiential. The goal is to experience the Risen Lord in your life, be transformed by that experience, and then become an agent, yourself, of transformation in the world. The Samaritan woman, from last weekend, just had to tell everyone about what and who she experienced at the well that day.

Growing in our faith is a lot slower in most of us than it is portrayed in many of these gospel stories. I have to wrestle with them a long time before I allow them to change me in any significant way. You might recall how the woman at the well grew in her understanding of Jesus. First she called him “sir.” Then she called him a “prophet.” Finally, as her understanding deepened, she called Jesus the “Messiah.” She was going deeper and deeper into Jesus’ true identity. Like her, we don’t get there in one fell swoop. We get there gradually, slowly, and reluctantly letting go of juvenile images of Jesus and God that don’t serve our adult souls anymore. That same pattern is in the story we just heard; the story of man born blind.

Again, like the woman at the well, we do not know this guy’s name. Just as you were that woman last week, you are this man this week. So am I. After he is healed of his blindness, he is immediately questioned by those who want to discredit either him or Jesus or both. When asked, “Who opened your eyes?” his initial response is simply, “A man called Jesus.” He knows nothing about this man except that his name is Jesus. That’s it.

The Pharisees, who see themselves as the only reference point of what is true in the world, ask the man, **“What do you say about him (Jesus)?”** The man goes a little deeper and responds, **“He is a Prophet.”** Those are the same words that came out of the Samaritan woman’s mouth in last Sunday’s gospel story. He’s a man named Jesus, he’s a prophet, and now comes an even deeper level of understanding. The man continues with, **“If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.”** What he’s implying is that this guy named Jesus is from God. Now comes the fourth layer of Jesus’ true identity about to be revealed. Jesus

returns, finds the man, and asks, ***“Do you believe in the Son of Man?”*** The man realizes he’s talking with the Son of Man. So, he’s a man named Jesus. He’s a prophet. He is from God. And he is the Son of Man.

Even though there is so much opposition to this man’s story his experience and the joy it has brought to his life are real, and he will not abandon it. The fifth thing, and the most profound thing, that this man comes to believe is this. He said, ***“Lord, I believe.”*** Jesus is the Lord of his life. He’s not just a man named Jesus, or a prophet, or from God, or the Son of Man—he is the Lord of this man’s life and the Lord of the world.

I’m grateful for the unfolding revelation that happened in the minds and hearts of the Samaritan woman and the man born blind. They have much to tell me about how faith unfolds in my life and in others. Faith doesn’t grow automatically, but it is often triggered by an experience that comes out of the blue. I need to pay attention to those experiences, the good and the bad. I also need to keep asking what Jesus is trying to open up in me and what Jesus may be asking of me. The fancy word for that is “discernment.”

There’s a little nugget in this story that previously went over my head. That’s probably why we have to hear these stories over and over again. After Jesus heals the man of his blindness, Jesus leaves. This man is on his own trying to make sense of this wonderful experience he just had. It’s not so much a story of how his vision is restored but a story of how his faith is restored. However, he’s on his own

and he's being badgered and belittled and called a sinner and a liar. Here comes the nugget for me. It says, "***when Jesus found him...***"

The guy can now see. You would think, with the help of his new eyes, he would go searching for Jesus. Instead, it is Jesus who found him. Jesus was looking for him, and this guy allowed himself to be found. Jesus is looking for everyone in this story. Some want to be found and rejoice in it; others prefer to remain in the dark.

As Church and society, we've made some progress in overcoming our blind spots, but many still remain. What blindness will future generations call us to account for? How can the healing power of Jesus lead us to true vision?

~Fr. Phil