

Reflection from John Surette, SJ

“As Jesus passed by he saw a man blind from birth...Jesus spat on the ground and made clay with his saliva, smeared the clay on the man’s eyes, and said to him, ‘Go wash in the Pool of Siloam’... So he went and washed, and came back able to see.”

An artist once told me that the reason many of us have difficulty sketching a tree is not that we lack the technical skills, which is often true, but that we do not see what is there before us. We are blind to it. We see it but we don’t see it. If we really saw the tree we would be able to sketch the tree.

The European ancestors of many of us in the chapel this morning, when they first came to our North American continent, looked upon the native people and perceived them to be uncivilized savages and heathens; they perceived them as being somehow less than human and therefore the Indians could be used, abused, enslaved and even killed.



The European ancestors of many of us were blind. Their eyes were dimmed. They could not see. They could not look upon the native peoples and see the beauty, the wisdom, the dignity, the sacredness, that stood there before them.

The Well

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Sacred Unity with God,
Earth, and One
Another.*

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The robber who points a gun at you looks at you and sees you only as being a source of money or jewelry. The robber is blind. He or she cannot look at you and see the beauty, the wisdom, the dignity, the sacredness, that you are as you stand there before the gun with your knees shaking and your heart pounding.

Those who pollute Earth's atmosphere, poison Earth's waters and dump toxins into Earth's soils, see Earth mainly as an enormous bottomless pit into which they can dump all that they do not want. Once the waste is out of sight in the pit, it is out of mind. Such polluters are blind. They cannot see their dependence upon and connections with Earth's air, water, and soil. They cannot perceive the beauty and the sacredness of these precious and necessary gifts for life.

All of us are blind at times. For example, when we look upon those who are different from us, those who speak differently or look differently than we do; those who have a different sexual orientation, have different political views, or belong to a different culture. When we look upon people who are different we often become threatened and fearful. Our fears cause us to be blind. We are prevented by our fears from seeing the beauty, the wisdom, the dignity, and the sacredness of the different people standing before us. We are prevented by our fears from experiencing compassion toward them.

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“Show me respect” is a cry that is often heard these days from the young, from those in relationships, from the down-pressed of our society. To show respect to someone is to look not just once at that person but to look again and again and again and to really see the beauty, the wisdom, the dignity, the sacredness, that is there before us.

If we can do this... if we can look with respect upon everything and everyone that exists and allow their fullness to wash up on the shores of our souls...if we can see as Jesus saw...one thing will be certain, we will be blessed and we will be changed. We will be filled with compassion. Our lives will never be the same again. We will be a new creation.

“I once was lost, but now am found, was blind but now I see...was blind but now I see.”

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