Whose Blind?  
Fourth Sunday Of Lent 2017

Reflection By: Deacon Paul Hursh

For those with sight, it is very difficult to know what it is like to be blind, especially to be blind from birth. If I close my eyes I can still see the light that comes through my eyelids. Even in a perfectly dark place, like a cave, I still have the images retained in my memory, which is something a person blind from birth can't have. In today's scriptures, we learn from a blind man, that there is more to blindness than the inability to see the physical reality that surrounds us. The blind man experiences the blindness of another kind, in others' reaction to his new-found sight.

One can be presented with something, an obvious truth, for example, the animate life of a child in the womb, and many will deny the reality of this life. Despite the proofs offered by the child's biology, physiology, and neurology, many maintain that since the infant cannot sustain itself outside the womb, it isn't a human person. Given this criteria, the term allowed for infanticide could extend far beyond their birthday – especially in the case of children who require Neonatal Intensive Care. Sadly, some societies practiced infanticide at different times in history and even today it is practiced in parts of India and China.

So that we don't get too proud and say, "Spiritual blindness doesn't occur in Christian communities," I point out the support for discrimination, prejudice, judgmentalism, based on a person's legal status, orientation, or religious affiliation. These biases go unchallenged despite Jesus' clear command to love one's enemies, to forgive offenses, and his consistent example of love and care for "sinners." A neighbor lady told me just today that her faith was challenged because in her church they were quick to denounce a recent Disney movie because of the portrayal of one of the characters as gay. The pastor's position against the Disney movie was emphasized while during the recent election their clergy openly supported candidates that
fostered discrimination against immigrants and refugees, and whose own moral behavior was abhorrent and did not respect persons of the opposite sex.

The only encouragement I could offer her was that, while we humans are flawed and often hold conflicting positions regarding the teachings of Jesus, we need to hold ourselves accountable to the highest standards of conduct and to speak the truth without malice to those in positions of authority in our communities – both civic and religious. Speaking the truth to those in power is the role of the prophet and this is a role we are all commanded to by our baptism. On our parting, I also warned her that the more perfectly we exercise our prophetic office, the more likely we are to earn the "prophet's reward." Like Jesus, in his day, prophets today will be singled out for special treatment in the form of ostracization, hatred, and ridicule (or worse). Jesus' response would have been, "Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven. Thus they persecuted the prophets who were before you." (Matthew 5:11-12)

The interesting thing is that when average churchgoers see these issues in sharp contrast to their own clergy, well schooled in the scriptures, they miss the obvious point, we can only wonder. Interesting that some Christian clergy suffers from the same spiritual blindness as the Pharisees did in Jesus' time. They see, but their sin remains, as do those who want the option to terminate an inconvenient pregnancy or disbelieve the inconvenient truth of global warming. I guess it is a matter of what we are ready to see or want to see in a situation. The grace to regain our sight is always there, as it was for the man blind at birth. We only have to be open and ask for sight from the Son of Man. Lord, give me your eyes so that I can see my blind spots.