

Being 'Ready' for Change  
March 27, 2022, Fourth Sunday of Lent  
Gospel of John 9:1-41  
Fr. John

A few years ago, as some of you might recall, I underwent surgery for a hip replacement. I was certainly anxious about the operation since I had never undergone surgery before. However I thought that I was more than ready to have it done if only to be rid of the incessant pain I was experiencing.

The surgeon who was to do the operation reminded me, however, that the operation itself was only the initial and perhaps the easier part of my recovery. The major part was, **Was I ready** to follow through with the weeks and months of post-operative physiotherapy and exercises needed to strengthen the muscles surrounding the new joint in order to insure the success of the operation?

In other words: the doctor was ready and able to do his part - was I ready to do mine.

The 6th and 7th steps of the 12 step recovery process state: 'We are entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character and we humbly asked God to remove our shortcoming. What are the connotations of being **entirely** ready? And how does this apply to the process of conversion in our lives?

Today's gospel is a rather lengthy account of a man's sight restored by Jesus. To have a major defect or handicap removed from our life might seem like a real gift - a 'no-brainer'. Who wouldn't want that!

For the man born blind, there would be nothing more desirable than to be able to see for the first time. But was he really prepared for that gift and what was to happen afterward? It's worth thinking about the consequences of this a little more carefully.

In Jesus' day, people who had such severe handicaps such as blindness would have had few options to make a living. Perhaps this individual had been looked after by his parents initially when he was young. But as an adult, he had to make his own way in the world and had to resort to begging. And no doubt this had been the main means of his survival for many years. It was all he knew - not having the possibility of developing any other skills.

So what happens to him now that he is suddenly physically able to see? He will have to give up his old life and find a new way to support himself. All of a sudden, this business of being a 'sighted person' has thrust a whole new set of responsibilities upon him - some of which may not be too attractive.

So it is with us. While the prospect of God removing our defects, at least in theory, may seem very desirable, we may have underestimated how 'at home' we were with our old vices. After all, we have nurtured them for so long that they have become a part of us. Spiritual darkness may have been such a normal state for us, that light would almost seem to be an intrusion.

Any readiness on our part would have to take into consideration the consequences of the **absence** of that defect. For example, someone who has given up drinking now has to deal with sobriety. All of the accompanying social and behavioural routines that went with it would have to be abandoned sometimes leaving the individual in a rather listless state. AA would label him or her a 'dry drunk.'

Yes the vice has been removed, but it has left a vacuum - a void that now has to be filled. Like Peter, after making his commitment to follow Jesus, we might be asking: 'Lord now that we have given up everything, what are we to have?' When we have let go of a chemical dependency, a destructive relationship, a distorted pattern of life or whatever has enslaved us for years, what, indeed are we to have?

At first, this 'new life' may bring with it more headaches and like the ancient Hebrews in the desert we may yearn to go back to Egypt. As the saying goes: The truth will set you free but first it will make you miserable!

So the blind man receives his sight and before you know it, all his neighbours start bugging him about how it happened. Then the Pharisees get on his case about an unlawful healing on the Sabbath - even to the point of dragging the man's elderly parents into it and causing them all kinds of agitation. Finally he winds up being excommunicated from the synagogue and treated as a 'persona non grata' - an unwelcome member of his own community. Likewise - yes, there is a price to be paid in asking God to remove the defects in our character.

In the finale of the story, Jesus seeks out the man and asks him: Do you still believe in me?' In other words do you still believe that it was all worthwhile? To which the man replies: 'Yes Lord I do believe'.

When we look back on some of the difficult decisions and changes we have had to make in our lives, most of us would say that we surely wouldn't want to go through that same process again. But at the same time, we have never regretted making the decisions that have given us our lives back again.

So today as we ponder the price of both **readying** ourselves and then **humbly asking** God to remove our defects, we pray that God will give us the grace to accept that new life that He has for us. Perhaps, this is the Lent when we finally respond to the exhortation mentioned in Paul's letter to the Ephesians in today's second reading: 'Sleeper awake! Rise from the dead and Christ will shine on you.'