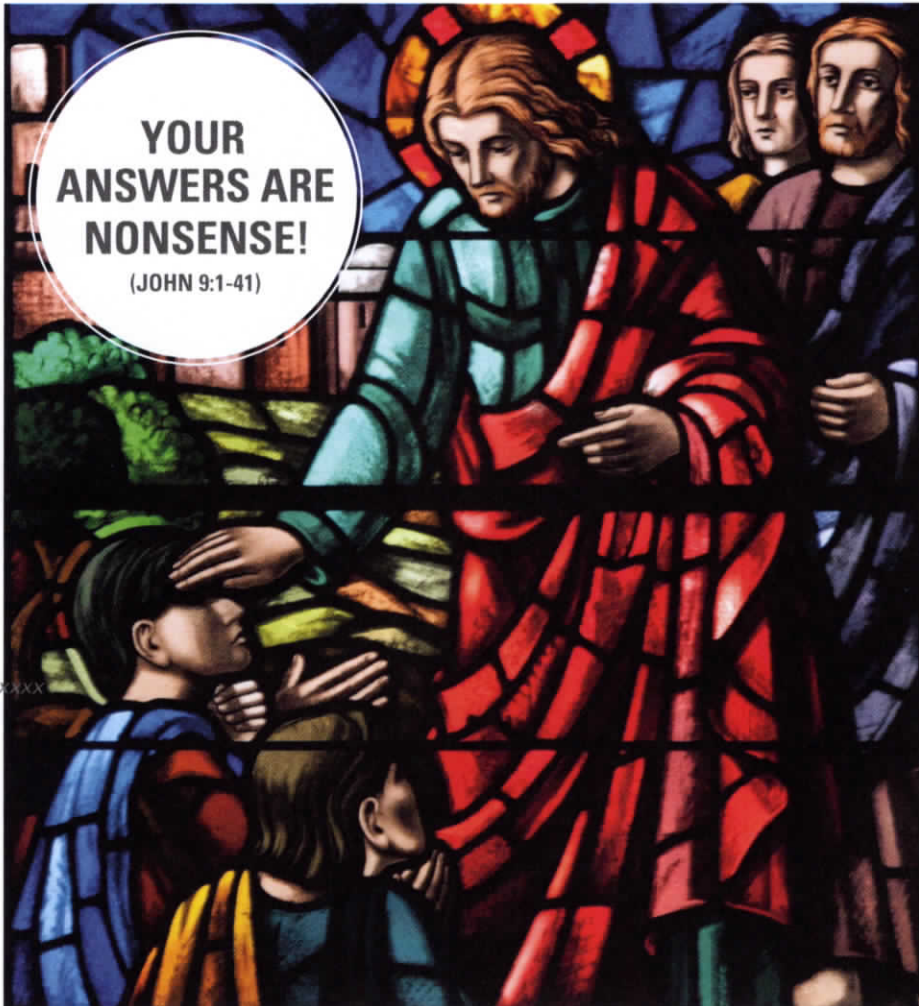


Sunday Message

THE WORD

Year A • Season Colour: Rose or Purple • Psalter Week 4



**YOUR
ANSWERS ARE
NONSENSE!**

(JOHN 9:1-41)

The story of the man born blind is regarded as one of the best-written narratives in the Scriptures.

The healing by Jesus leads to the person coming to faith in him by clinging to his own experience in the face of challenges from the highly educated religious authorities. All that the man in question knows that is Jesus has cured him, and so cannot be a sinner, whether he has acted on the Sabbath or not. By remaining true to his convictions, his appreciation of Jesus deepens, from being the man called Jesus, to a prophet and, finally, Lord, and worshipping him. The leaders remain true to their convictions, but these lead them deeper into unbelief. Their initial efforts to disprove the healing fail, so they argue from theology: because Jesus does not keep the Sabbath, he cannot be from God. They cannot match the arguments of their irrepressible opponent so end up resorting to insult and excommunication.

It is by remaining faithful to his own experience and rejecting seemingly logical arguments from the religious authorities that the former blind man finds himself in the presence of Jesus and makes his act of faith. This is the culmination of a gradual process in understanding, and an example of how a person can come to faith in Jesus. ■

DO

If you can see, thank the Lord for your ability. Give some of your Lenten alms to a charity for the blind.

SAY

I am the light of the world, says the Lord
(John 9:5)

REFLECT

Some people imagine that the Gospels simply relate historical events which have little bearing on the present day. This applies especially to those who imagine they understand fully how God operates, people who devise a theological system and feel that everything is now worked out: Jesus' criticism of the religious authorities of his day cannot possibly apply to those of our own. But the Bible warns us that this is a dangerous way of thinking. The Book of Job is the classic critique of conventional theological wisdom.

The Gospel passage today is a masterpiece, comical in places, of the (formally) uneducated person who defeats the theologically qualified simply by pointing out the flaws in their argument. The most telling comment about the religious authorities in the story (and sometimes in our own day) is that they simply will not listen to the story of other people whose experience does not fit with their well-worked-out abstract theories. They accuse the healed man – and, implicitly, his parents – of being in bad faith, instead of thinking, maybe we should look at this again.

It is by not accepting the easy answers but by remaining true to himself and his experience that the person in the story, who represents anyone in a similar position, comes to true belief in Jesus. Unless we examine what we believe, we will not grow in our faith and understanding of Jesus and our relationship with him. This is not to doubt the truth: it is saying that the way we understand it has to change as we do. Pope John XXIII famously said that the deposit of faith is one thing: the way it is presented is another. Yesterday's answers may not be sufficient for today's questions. ■

LEARN

The expression 'the Jews' in the Fourth Gospel usually applies to the religious leaders, not to the people as a whole.

The Pharisees feature in the story today: the term is interchangeable with the Jews.

Both groups are presented as being opposed to Jesus.