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## SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS

There was an article that appeared in *The New York Times Magazine*, way back in 1991, concerning a group of more than one hundred women who reside in Long Beach, California. These women, Cambodian refugees who witnessed the atrocities of the 'killing fields' horror of the Pol Pot regime, are certifiably blind even though doctors say their eyes function perfectly well. These sightless women suffer from psychosomatic, or hysterical blindness. They are blind, but their blindness stems not from damage to their bodies but damage to their minds.

Scientists really do not understand fully this phenomenon, only that it shows the power of the mind over the body. As one researcher explained it: "losing eyesight makes sense if you are trying to escape the stress of the situation, for example like the women witnessing something so terrifying and horrid, that the mind completely shuts down their sense of sight. At the movie theatre you don't cover your ears when grotesque violence comes on the screen. You'll always cover your eyes." These women have eyes that function normally - still they cannot see. They are blind even though they should be able to see clearly.

Jesus encounters a man born blind in today's gospel from John and restores his sight on the Sabbath, which is prohibited by the Torah for one shall not work on the Sabbath. The man's neighbours and some others brought him to the Pharisees, who questioned him about Jesus, saying, "This man is not from God because he does not keep the Sabbath", while others called Jesus a sinner. In fact, it's the Pharisees who are spiritually blind for failing to see beyond the law to the spirit of the law. If any law blocked God's healing from reaching a person in need, Jesus would bend it or even break it.

There are those who experience hysterical blindness, because they have gone through some horrific experience like the Cambodian women in the story above, through no fault of their own, though their eyesight is normal. And there are those who are spiritually blind, like the Pharisees, though their eyesight is normal, but fail to see the needs of the people. For Spirituality the law is a means, not an end in itself, but love is. And if we cannot see that than we then to be spiritually blind.

This text from John's gospel teaches us that if we follow the gospel blindly and teach others to do the same, we will find ourselves in the dark rather than in the light.

**Reflection by Glenn de Cruz, CSsR**

# Novena notes



4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent  
 Year A  
 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2020

## Readings & Responses for the Week

Sun, 22 March	1 Sam 16:1, 6-7, 10-13; Eph 5:8-14; Jn 9:1-41 The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.
Mon, 23 March	Is 65:17-21; Jn 4:43-54 I will praise you, Lord, you have rescued me.
Tue, 24 March	Ez 47:1-9, 12; Jn 5:1-16 The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold.
Wed, 25 March Annunciation of the Lord	Is 7:10-14, 8:10; Hebr 10:4-10; Lk 1:26-38 Here I am, Lord! I come to do your will.
Thu, 26 March	Ex 32:7-14; Jn 5:31-47 O Lord, remember me, out of the love you have for your people.
Fri, 27 March	Wis 2:1, 12-22; Jn 7:1-2, 10, 25-30 The Lord is close to the broken-hearted.
Sat, 28 March	Jer 11:18-20; Jn 7:40-52 Lord God, I take refuge in you.

All other services, including novenas and weekday masses remain suspended. The church will also remain closed during the week.