

realpeople

the gospel in everyday language



In today's readings:

David is anointed King of Israel.

1 Samuel 16:1,6-7,10-13

Wake up from your sleep! Ephesians 5:8-14

The blind man has his sight restored. John 9:1-41

Next week:

The compassion of Jesus.

Ezekiel 37:12-14; Romans 8:8-11;

John 11:1-45

In a nutshell

Today we hear how a man who was blind had his sight restored. When Jesus worked wonders it often caused disagreement among the authorities who would argue among themselves. In contrast to their stubborn blindness stands the bold faith of the man who was cured. He has no hesitation in accepting Jesus as Lord.



Blindness

Recalling his visit to the Philippines (1998), a priest tells of the time he gained entry to a jail to meet with some political prisoners.

As we approached the jail, my first impression was that it was well kept. In fact, every stone, every tree and the whole front of the jail was white-washed. I had the distinct impression that this was a case of cleaning up the outside in order to distract from what lay within. Already I felt uneasy.

Then a rather tall Filipino warden came to speak with us. 'Never trust any of the prisoners,' he warned. 'You never know when they are going to turn against you. They are dangerous. So when you go inside, be careful.' I felt quite afraid.

At last we were ushered into the main part of the prison. We had to be body searched. We could take no cameras, no keys, no bags. The back of my right hand was stamped with the day's date.

We were ushered into a large open room with high stone walls.

The windows had bars on them and it was dark inside. After a long wait a dozen men were brought in. Each wore a T-shirt displaying the sign: Maximum Security Prisoner.

The stories these men told us were disturbing. Through an interpreter they spoke of being tortured to the point of confessing to crimes they did not commit. One told how he was held with his head under water while he fought desperately for breath. Another told how he received electric shocks. And so it went on. Their 'confessions' had been used in court to convict them.

These men remain in prison - out of view of other Filipinos and the rest of the world. This is one way to keep the world blind. Hide these people from sight and tell no one about them.

During our time in the Philippines we saw lepers. We saw people who live on dumpsites and make their living from the sale of what they scavenge from a stinking pile of rubbish. We saw children who live on the streets - robbing, prostituting, involved in gang warfare. We saw many things 'hidden' from the public eye; things the eye would rather not see. (Noel)

Writing a wrong

We felt privileged to have Rita, a young woman from East Timor, speak to our East Timor justice group (in 1998).

Rita had been imprisoned twice over the years for speaking out against injustices in her country. I asked Rita if the letters we wrote on behalf of prisoners of conscience made any difference. 'Please keep

writing,' Rita said emphatically. 'The first time I was imprisoned, they treated me terribly. But the second occasion was so different. I had been placed on an international list of prisoners of conscience and people were encouraged to write mentioning my name and circumstances. The guards would come and say to me, "We treat you special, you are famous." Hearing those words was like having a candle in my cell.' (Vic)

Talk...Pray...Act

- The greatest blindness is not lack of physical sight but self-deception.
- Describe a time when you saw someone or something from a more loving and truthful standpoint. What was it that altered your vision?
- Give an example of how your faith in Christ has brought clarity to your world view. Like the blind man in today's Gospel, has such clarity ever put you at odds with others?
- Join or start a local group that takes constructive action for human rights.



RealPeople offers faith reflections from the saints and prophets of everyday life.

A publication of
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