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“A blind man was sitting by the roadside begging” (Luke 18:35).

Rev 1:1-4; 2:1-5; Luke 18: 35-43

Despite the chaos and continued suspense of our national elections, something positive can be said about the level of participation. People who have been on the sidelines are now involved in our political process as voters, activists and demonstrators. Today's Gospel is also about a man who had lived his whole life on the sidelines because he was blind. Being able to see enabled him to get involved. When Jesus healed him, the man jumped up and followed him on the road.

Another less positive aspect of our election process was how forces were at work to keep people from participating through voter suppression, disinformation and by making it harder to cast their ballots. The crowd in today's Gospel also tried to keep the blind beggar from getting to Jesus, but he was determined to be heard. Jesus called him from the crowd, then asked him a question that is directed to all of us: “What do you want me to do for you?”

The blind beggar showed his readiness to be a disciple by answering, “Lord, I want to see.” This is the first step in our own discipleship. Only if we see can we follow Jesus. Spiritual or moral blindness, either inflicted or self-imposed, keeps us in the dark, unable to begin our journey with him. Discipleship begins when our eyes are opened to the realities around us, to the plight of others, to our own responsibility to use our lives and gifts purposefully instead of sitting on the sidelines as others pass by.

Opening our eyes is just the beginning. We must learn to see. Some ways of seeing, like myopia and prejudice, distort reality and narrow our vision. Seeing without wisdom or empathy becomes another form of blindness, even more dangerous because we think we see. Jesus first healed the blind man physically, then healed him again in an even deeper way because the first thing he saw was the face of Jesus. The look of love he saw was his first glimpse into the mystery of God's will for him, which was to rise up and follow Jesus.

Today's Gospel offers a wonderful chance to experience what the blind man experienced in his encounter with Jesus. Benedictines practice a way of entering the scriptures in three steps: *Lectio* (reading); *Meditatio* (reflection); and *Oratio* (prayer). Read the text slowly three times, imagining the scene and the characters,

letting the dialogue become personal. Enter the crucial moment when Jesus asks, "What do you want me to do for you?"

Consider doing this. Clear your mind of any preconceived ideas or "correct" responses and listen to the silence in your heart before you answer the question.

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