Spirituality
Pencil Preaching



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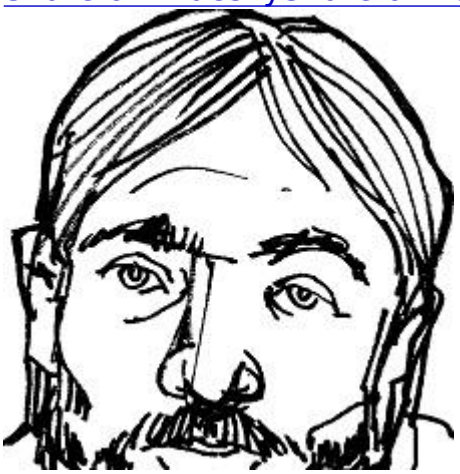

“Do you see anything?” (Mark 8:24).

Gn 8:6-13, 20-22; Mk 8:22-26

In the previous chapter of Mark’s Gospel, we read about the healing of a deaf mute. Jesus leads the man away from the crowd and, using spittle and touch, restores first his hearing and then his ability to speak.

In today’s Gospel, Jesus heals a blind man by putting spittle on his eyes. Like the earlier miracle, some creative effort is evident, and the healing seems to happen in

stages, again performed in private, away from the crowds.

One possible explanation for this manner of healing is that Mark wanted to emphasize that Jesus is like God at creation. He uses spittle and mud, touch and prayers, even special words like Ephphatha (“Be opened”). Jesus is the source of the light that makes sight possible. “Let there be light.”

And like the first creation, Jesus works with what he has. He is like an artist in clay, creating with sighs and breath, touch and even spittle, an intimate expression of personal identity (as anyone knows who has provided a saliva sample to discover his or her entire genetic heritage). Or think of the intimate care of a mother using saliva on a tissue to wipe a smudge from the child’s face before they greet relatives.

Another way to understand these miracles is to see them as stages on the way to recognition and faith. The blind man can hear Jesus’ voice but cannot see him. He feels Jesus leading him outside the village, then the sensation of Jesus touching his eyes. At first, he can only see form and color, describing people as “walking trees.” Only with additional touch does the man see clearly. The first thing he sees clearly is the face of Jesus, a vision that inspires faith.

These are also resurrection stories. Before we know Jesus we are barely alive, unconscious, blind, deaf and mute to the full encounter with God that is always present to us. We must be awakened to a new life, called into being by the Word.

Jesus works with us where we are and at whatever stage of development we are in. He works through the ordinary circumstances, limitation and problems of our everyday lives to awaken us to greater and greater awareness of what God has in store for us. Discipleship is an ongoing encounter that draws us deeper and deeper into the divine life Jesus is offering us.

This is why the perfect prayer is, “Lord, I long to see your face.”