

Experience a voice unlike yours...

That practice continues to be at the center of my Lenten discipline. I know we're doing much of that together with our Lenten Soup Suppers, with the reading and discussing of *The New Jim Crow*. Many of you are reading the Living Well meditation booklet *Listening With All Your Heart, Soul, Strength, and Mind*, and last week's meditations focused on cultivating the discipline of listening. We deeply experience a voice unlike ours when we honor the other by listening. On Friday night we listened to the voices of our tablemates at the Lenten program and we were invited to listen to the still small voice of God. God's voice is certainly unlike ours. How do we experience God's voice?

In today's gospel we hear about eyes and ears. Jesus healed the man born blind and then there is a lot of conversation around him. The neighbors, the Pharisees don't recognize him after the healing. "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" (John 9:8). I wonder why they didn't recognize him after knowing him for years. His parents wanted him to answer for himself the question: "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" (John 9:19). Perhaps the parents were afraid to answer, not knowing what might happen to them. To the man the neighbors and others asked, "How were your eyes opened?" (John 9:10). The blind man was asked that question again later in the story

followed by a theological dialogue about sinners and who God listens to or doesn't. Did the people listen and just not believe and thereby asked the question again?

The blind man, now sighted, experiences Jesus. He experiences the voice of one unlike his own. He sees Jesus after his eyes are opened. He calls Jesus a prophet. He proclaims Jesus to be from God. He calls Jesus "Lord" and worships him. He is not only changed physically with the ability to see, he is transformed to know and believe who Jesus is when all the others could not.

The story reminds us of the importance of both seeing and hearing. Our eyes and our ears are essential. Jesus brings light into our lives in moments of great darkness and in moments of light. Those of us who are sighted have blind spots that keep us from seeing clearly. Sometimes we shut our eyes to the things around us and/or close our ears to the voices that are unlike ours. This blind man's story reminds us profoundly of the healing power of Jesus and also of the presence of Jesus in lives that may be darkened. Jesus stands with the blind man, now sighted, even when the others in his life did not. We're invited to keep our eyes and our ears open to all that's around us—to the healing that may be happening in us and to the healing that is happening in others, knowing that Jesus is standing with us! That's good news for us all.