

B I M A I L

BIBLE FOR THE DARING

by Dominik Markl SJ

Nr. 191

7 November 2008

Looks which heal

In moments of trust we begin to understand each other more deeply; such healing moments open up a view of the world.

**"Go," he told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam" (this word means Sent).
John 9,7**

A tiny insect flew into the eye of a companion in the mountains during a summer hiking trip and got caught in her upper right eyelid. No one can get the animal out; blinking and rubbing are no help. Her eye rebels. The pain becomes acute. In addition, even the thought of having someone touch her eye is a horror. Nonetheless, she has no choice. With all the power she can muster she holds her streaming eye open so that her husband can gently push out the tiny beast. At that moment, my eyes are opened and I suddenly understand how much trust she places in her husband.

How much more does the man who was born blind have to trust Jesus when he rubs dirt mixed with spit in his eyes (John 9, 6)? The eye is not only the most sensitive part of the body for him. His blindness must also have traumatized him emotionally, when even the friends of Jesus have asked: "Who has sinned so that he was born blind – he or his parents?" (John 9, 2) He can trust because Jesus looked at him, understood him and protected him: Neither he nor his parents have sinned. He listens to Jesus and goes to wash himself.

The gospel writer John does not describe anything beyond this. If we want to accompany the man we are left to our own fantasies. As he makes his way through the commotion of the streets of Jerusalem which he knows by heart, he goes steeply downhill towards the valley of Kidron. Some Pharisees respectfully move out of the way. Boys who are roughhousing make him angry. His eyes burn. What might this blind man be thinking? "Why should I go down there to the spring of Gihon where Salomon was anointed king (1 Kings 1, 38-39)? Why to the Pool of Siloam? The one "Sent" -- this is just like Jesus. For me he is like an angel sent from God. And the prophet Josiah comes to mind, he said about the pool: We from Judah should appreciate the quietly flowing water of Siloam, otherwise wild water will come over us (Jos 8, 6-7). That also is just like Jesus. He spoke to me in such a healing and calm way." The blind man arrives and washes himself. At this moment he not only sees the world with new eyes, he begins to see the world for the first time ever.

Moments of great trust are chances for deep insight. Like the man born blind, a new view can break in: "For the first time I understand how much I mean to you and who you are to me. The world is illuminated in another light, a shining color because I have understood more about who you are and what you are like. Now everything looks different." That is the healing look, a changed view, the birth of a new world.

Who can I allow to look me so deeply in the eyes that I know I am understood and I find it healing? Are there fleeting moments in which I experience the God looking at me?