

# Along the track

## What do we See?

The late Fred Hollows was an ophthalmologist who became famous for his work in restoring eyesight for countless thousands of people in Australia but more so many other countries where such an operation was rarely available or where people could not afford it. He was dedicated and tireless. An advertisement appealing for funds for his foundation is still run on TV at regular intervals – it is a wonderful clip depicting the joy in an elderly man when bandages are being removed. “What did he say? What did he say?” Hollows asks. ‘I can see again! I can see!’ It is a moment of extraordinary joy for all concerned and an act of great trust. This man must have been told about this operation by friends and family; he undergoes the surgery, a procedure completely unknown to him and yet he trusts.

Jesus’ healing of the blind man is intriguing from a number of angles, not the least because it is a miracle in two stages. It is about trust.

*So He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village. Then He spat on the man’s eyes and placed His hands on him. “Can you see anything?” He asked. The man looked up and said, “I can see the people, but they look like trees walking around.” Once again Jesus placed His hands on the man’s eyes, and when he opened them his sight was restored, and he could see everything clearly.... Mark 8 23-25*

Friends of this blind man brought him along to Jesus. The miracle is very tactile. Jesus takes him by the hand and leads him out of the village, he uses spit, he places hands on the eyes, gives words of encouragement.

A couple of years ago, due to complications with an illness a friend of mine went blind. It was, to say the very least, a very tough blow. He told me that it was hard enough learning how to renegotiate his world but he had to learn to place his trust in others in ways and to a degree that he had never imagined. He came to rely on others almost totally, to be taken by the hand, guided around what were once familiar places. Perhaps that may be the origin of the expression ‘blind trust’. He said that he came to appreciate others so much more, taking so much less for granted, not only the people around him but even complete strangers. ‘Sometimes’, he said, ‘I just needed help’.

Sometimes we simply have to trust. Fear stops us, the fear of rejection, fear of getting it wrong, fear of being laughed at, fear of the unknown, fear of being taken advantage of, fear of losing something... well, fear of almost anything. We can allow fear to take over. At other times we become discouraged, that nothing is working and that it all depends on us. It doesn’t. We cannot always ‘go it alone’. Sometimes we just don’t let others help – we think no-one can do it as well as we can and they won’t want to help anyway. Like my friend, sometimes we too just need help. When we get down off our high horse, when we get in touch with our vulnerability, we realise how much we do need others, that we are made to be with others, to work with others, to build community together. That begins when we learn to trust others.

Our children grow and mature when we learn to trust them. Loving them ‘without possessiveness’ rolls off the tongue but it is never easy, being firm and protective is so much simpler! But love is also letting go, and that means trusting them. Enterprises flourish when we learn to trust others to show initiative, to do it their way. Tight control over everything just tells people that you don’t value or trust their judgement or their contribution.

And we grow too when we learn to trust. But it’s not easy. In the words of spiritual writer, Fr Ron Rolheiser: *Perhaps if we had all been loved perfectly, had perfect confidence, and had never been wounded, disappointed, betrayed, or made to cry tears of regret, we would find it easier to believe that it is safe, that we can trust, that we have no need to protect ourselves, and that we do not need to be forever anxious about how we are measuring up, how we are being perceived, how we are being understood, and whether we are worthy of love.*

Back to the two-stage healing of the blind man. Learning to trust takes time, it doesn’t happen overnight or in one go. We start by seeing but ‘unclearly’, learning in stages, beginning by appreciating others more, recognising their contributions, their gifts, working at overcoming our desire to always be right, until life and other people help us to have confidence in the gift of God’s love and the power of God’s grace.

Regards  
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