

The Curing of the Blind Man

Matte Acrylic 9' x 17'.

Was it Blind Bartimaeus, son of Timaeus who sat begging by the roadside and cried out “Son of David, have mercy on me!” (Mark 10:46)? Or was it the other blind man in Bethsaida, whom his friends entreated Jesus to touch, and when he did, anointing his eyes with spittle, asked him “do you see?” and he replied, “I see men – like trees – walking.” (Mark 8:32) Among the many blind Jesus cured, it must have been this latter case since I recall Abbot Eugene suggesting we represent the friends as boys from the school.

This mural was undertaken after completing the Temptation of Saint Benedict. Although fresco would have been my preference, that was prevented by the wall having already been plastered and painted. So my first chore was scouring off the house paint with pumice stone. The ground color was painted with a new medium “Ethyl Silicate”, reported to be permanent and durable, but unfortunately as it turned out with a high gloss finish. We had to change it to Matte acrylic medium for the painting. The brothers built a ladder scaffold so I could reach the entire wall by raising or lowering planks.

Since the nine by seventeen foot mural is painted in a tall stairwell, the main viewing points are from the top landing, and from the bottom corridor looking up. The figures, though life size, are elongated compensating for the foreshortening when seen from above or below.

There is no field shown outside the village where the anointing took place nor any sign of the people walking like trees. The site of a mural always determines my handling of the subject. So the stairwell is the locale where the miracle takes place! The three walls become symbolic of the confinement in which the blind man lives. When Jesus enters his darkness we recessed the mural surface into two abutting walls forming a niche. Christ stands with the two boys, imposing His hands on the

sightless Bethsaidan, restoring at last the true Vision, not merely of sight, but of a window opened to the revelation of Christ.

This work was completed May 7th, 1978.