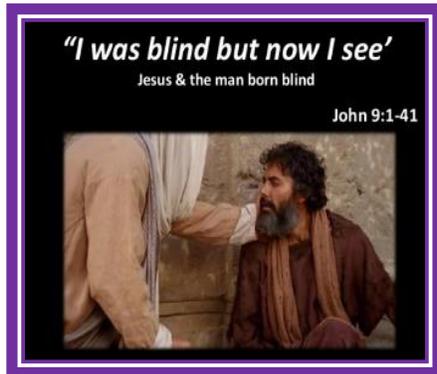


March 22, 2020 – 4th Sunday of Lent



Allowing our eyes to see more and to be opened to Light of God's Will in our lives

1 Samuel 16:1,6-7,10-13, Ephesians 5:8-14, John 9:1-41

The Fourth Sunday of Lent is known as "Laetare (Rejoice) Sunday," expressing the Church's joy in anticipation of the Resurrection of our Lord. Today's readings both remind us that it is God who gives us a proper vision in the body as well as in soul and instruct us that we should be constantly on our guard against spiritual blindness.

Scripture lessons summarized: By describing the anointing of David as the second king of Israel, the first reading, taken from the First Book of Samuel, illustrates how blind we are in our judgments and how much we need God's help. In the second reading, St. Paul reminds the Ephesians of their new responsibility as children of light to live as children of the light, producing every kind of goodness and righteousness and truth." In today's Responsorial Psalm, (Ps 23), we celebrate the care of God, our Good Shepherd, who keeps us safe in the darkness of this world. Presenting the miracle of Jesus' giving of sight to a man born blind, today's Gospel teaches us the necessity of opening the eyes of our mind by Faith and warns us that those who assume they see the truth are often blind, while those who acknowledge their blindness are given clear vision. Our Lenten prayers and sacrifices should serve to heal our spiritual blindness so that we can look at others, see them as children of God and love them as our own brothers and sisters saved by the death and Resurrection of Jesus.

1. Seeing More

The blind man in today's gospel did not ask Jesus to heal him. Jesus was passing by, saw him, made a paste, spread it on his eyes, and told him to go

and wash in the pool of Siloam. How strange and unexpected this experience must have been for the man who was born blind. An unfamiliar voice from the darkness, a warm and wet paste over his eyes, a command to go and wash without any explanation, and then—light, vision, a new life.

Today's gospel is not only about seeing. It is about seeing more. You and I can see. We see trees, our computer screens, and the members of our families. But that does not mean that we see all that is necessary. This is why we are called to follow the example of the man born blind, living our lives with eyes open, seeing more and more until we finally see Jesus face to face. But all too often, we take the stance that the Pharisees adopt at the end of today's gospel. "We see," we say, "and what we see today is enough." Jesus warns us that whenever proudly we say, "We see," we are only revealing our own blindness. It is only by our willingness to see more that we will be able to arrive at the place where God wants us to be.

You and I confidently say that we see ourselves, that we know who we are, that we recognize our own abilities, relationships, and potential. But then we experience divorce, sickness, doubt, or depression, and we need to see more. We need to see how it is still possible to have a life that is positive and fulfilling, even when who we are has changed. We need to see how we can continue to have hope, even when our relationships are shattered, our health is threatened, or we must deal with the difficulties of growing older.

We confidently say that we see who God is. We read of God's love in the Scriptures. We study God's power in our catechisms. And then tragedy strikes, and we have to face the reality of evil. We begin to doubt. How can a good and loving God allow the innocent to suffer and violence to reign? How could God allow this bad thing to happen to me? Once again, we need to see more. We need to see that the image of God that we formed in grade school is too small, that our God is a God of mystery who we cannot completely comprehend. We need an adult faith that is more about trusting than explaining.

We can only grow if we are willing to see more. That is why we can never say that what we see today is complete. But it is good news that our God is willing to lead us in the journey to greater sight. Our God is willing to use our abilities and our experiences, as God used the abilities and experiences of the man born blind, to lead us to a deeper truth. Our stance then must be one of humility and trust. We pray, "Lord, I can see, but help me to see more. I place my life in your hands." Seeing begins with trust. That is why before we can open our eyes, we must be willing to open our hearts.

2. Hold on to one Truth – God leads us to all Truth:

There are many times in life where we become overwhelmed, overwhelmed and confused. There are times where it's not clear to us what we should do. We very seldom get the whole picture or see every truth. But if one truth is clear, and if we hold on to that truth, we believe that God will use that truth to lead us to where we need to be.

This is what happened to the man born blind in today's gospel. He was overwhelmed with the tremendous miracle of sight. He had been blind from birth. And yet from the moment that he began to see, people tried to convince him who Jesus was that he was a sinner, that he didn't observe the Sabbath. It was difficult for the man born blind to assess the truth of these statements made by people who were much more educated and had much more authority than he did. But he knew one thing, and he held fast to the thing that he knew. As he says in the gospel, "I know one thing. I was blind, and now I see." And because **he held on to that one simple truth, God led him to all truth. God led him to accept Jesus as his Lord.**

The same is true for us. There are times when life overwhelms us when it is not clear what we should decide, what we should do. But if we are given one truth, one clear truth, and if we hold on to that truth, we believe that God will lead us to where we need to be.

It is like the alcoholic who understands his life is falling apart. Nothing is working in his job, in his family, in his relationships, in his view of himself. But he knows one thing: unless I stop drinking, I will die. As long as he holds on to that one truth, he can find salvation. It is like a woman in an abusive relationship, conflicted in what she should do, conflicted over her self-image, her responsibility, her commitment. But she knows one truth, the truth that unless she leaves that relationship, her children will suffer. If she holds on to that truth, she can move forward. It is like many people who are devastated by the loss of someone they love, who are overwhelmed with grief, whose life is turned upside down. They become paralyzed. But if they can hold on to one truth, that there are still people in their lives who love them and who will be with them, that one truth can allow life to begin again. It is like all of us who deal with the many demands of life, with the demands that come from our work, from our family, from our education, from our service. We become confused about what to do next. Yet, if we can hold on to one truth: that we must find time to invest in our relationships, to spend time with our children, with our friends. If we hold on to that truth, that one truth will lead us to where we need to be.

Life frequently overwhelms us. We do not see the whole picture. Not everything is clear. But if we have clarity in one truth that we can see, and

if we hold on to that truth, we believe that God will take care of the rest. That truth might be a remarkable miracle that replaces blindness with sight.

But whatever our truth is, we believe that God will use what is clear to lead us through what is unclear. We believe that God will use the little that we know to lead us to life.

As you know the Coronavirus Epidemic is the most serious health problem that we have had to face as a society in our lifetimes. We do face what lies ahead, it is important that we do so from a perspective of faith. **The coronavirus has no known cure. In that sense, it is greater than us. It is greater than our leaders, greater than our medical professionals. But it is not greater than Jesus. God continues to be active and present in our world, and as always God stands with us to give us the strength and wisdom for whatever we need to face.** You and I face a crisis of historic proportions, but God is greater than the coronavirus. So, let us draw on God's wisdom and God's strength to support one another until this virus is defeated.

As we face this health problem, let us see more and hold on to one truth, "Jesus is the Healer and guides the researchers, doctors, and people who work in health care" and thus we can experience LIGHT, VISION, and NEW LIFE.

3. We need to allow Jesus to heal our spiritual blindness.

We all have blind-spots — in our marriages, our parenting, our work habits, and our personalities. We are often blind to the presence of the Triune God dwelling within us and fail to appreciate His presence in others. Even practicing Christians can be blind to the poverty, injustice, and pain around them. Let us remember, however, that Jesus wants to heal our blindness. We need to ask him to remove from us the root causes of our blindness: namely, self-centeredness, greed, anger, hatred, prejudice, jealousy, addiction to evil habits and hardness of heart.

Let us pray:

Lord God, open my eyes to the true meaning of life. Heal me of everything that blocks me from accepting you fully as our loving God and from letting go of all that does not lead to true peace and seeing all as our brothers and sisters too.

Jesus, I Trust In You