

### Fr Ryan Homily 3-19-2023

Read: 1 Samuel 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a; Psalm 23; Ephesians 5:8-14; John 9:1-41

So there's a man named Nick and Nick is the son of a pastor and his wife. He's their oldest son I believe and when Nick was born in the delivery room his dad was waiting there so excited. Any dad I would imagine just so excited to be there and see his son be born. And Nick's head came out of the womb and he's like okay, here's my child. And then he saw his shoulder and he saw that there was no arm attached to Nick's shoulder, to his baby boy's shoulder. And this man he was so devastated seeing this he said that he was ashamed of it but he said he had to leave the delivery room and go sit in the waiting room. Because he said my son has no arm. And he waited out there for his son to be born and the doctor came out after Nick was born and the dad stood up, collected himself, and said okay doctor why does my son not have an arm? And the doctor said actually your son has no arms and he has no legs. And his dad was just devastated hearing that and Nick talks about this later in life. His mom didn't want to hold him, didn't want to feed him. For a few months his dad wouldn't look at him struggling with why. And even the whole congregation of Nick's parents were like why would God let this happen? Like why would God do this to a pastor's child? Why would this happen? Why would God let this happen? In fact that's really the question they're asking in the gospel today. They look at this man born blind, and they say why would God do this? Like who's fault is this? And maybe you've had reason to ask that same question cause we experience suffering, we experience sickness or loss, we experience any kind of illness whether it be physical illness, mental illness, and we're like what the heck God? Like who's fault is this? Cause that's what we want to do. We want to track down who we can blame. Did someone, did I do something wrong and that's why I'm now sick. Does God not love me and that's why he's leaving me like this? What did I do to deserve this? Why couldn't God have made me whole? Why couldn't He have made me better? All these questions run through our minds and our hearts. Cause it's like we recognize that there is a connection between sin and sickness – that we know God made this world good. He made it perfect, but He didn't make it unbreakable. Right, when He placed our first parents here He gave them a choice and they chose to sin. And that one decision, it broke the world for everybody, for the rest of us because God made this world good but He didn't make our world unbreakable. So we know that

there's a connection between sin and sickness. The reason there is sickness in our world is because of sin but it's not necessarily because of your own sin or my sin. Originally, like in the Old Testament, they thought it was a one-to-one thing. Like if you sin you get sick. If you do good, then you'll be blessed. That's just a really simple way to think about it. It was like karma almost and God had to reveal that that's not how it goes. That's not how it works cause really good people can just have all sorts of suffering poured on them and really awful people can get everything they want. And that can be frustrating in its own way, to see that. But it also shows this theory of my sin causes my suffering is wrong. But all of that, we do that to stay on the surface. And we like to stay on the surface when we look at things because that's easier. It's easier to judge by appearances. But that was the first reading! It says human beings judge by appearances, but the Lord looks into the heart. And what God wants to do in your life and in my life, He wants to go deeper. And so sometimes He will allow those surface wounds to remain. If He doesn't heal them, He doesn't fix them so that He can go deeper and address something else. Sometimes He allows the consequences to exist in our lives so that we can go deeper because the sickness or the blindness or the suffering, the real in our lives but they also reveal something deeper -that there's a bigger problem. The man born blind; he has this blindness. It's a lack of a good thing and that was a problem, but it also revealed something deeper in him. That he didn't just not be able to see that he was unseen. Think about it, even in the parable as this plays out, people don't even know that this man is there. They walk right past him every day; they don't even acknowledge him. And I think a lot of us know what it is to walk through life not having less but feeling less. Like being unseen. And while they are real wounds they reveal a deeper wound, this deeper illness. And for Nick, the man who was born with no limbs, he experienced the same thing. When he was about ten years old he asked his mom and dad to put him in the bathtub. He said I just wanna relax but he said later he really wanted to kill himself. So he asked his mom and dad, put me in the bathtub cause he thought I'm just gonna drown myself. I'm just gonna end it cause I can't live like this. I mean can you imagine a ten-year-old having that thought? I'm gonna end my life. And his parents put him in the bathtub, and he rolled over a couple of times to do it and he said I just couldn't do it. And the reason he said I couldn't do it was because his parents loved him and embraced him. Like after this initial shock of seeing their son with no limbs and having to come to terms with that, they loved

him so deeply and so well. And Nick said I just pictured my funeral, and I couldn't do that to my mom or dad. I couldn't put them through that. I couldn't let them live the rest of their lives wondering could we have loved Nick better? Cause Nick's problem wasn't that he didn't have arms or legs, like that was a real issue obviously – so real suffering- but I revealed something deeper. It revealed that Nick was like I'm angry and I don't trust God. I'm angry and I don't trust God. That was the deeper pain that the other thing revealed in his heart. That was the deeper wound and so the question of course is what does God do in the midst of this? We ask what does God do because we want God to give us an answer. Because we know not everybody receives a miracle. Right not everybody gets healed like the man in the gospel but the biggest thing that needs healing is our trust in God and we want an answer from the Lord. Nick even after deciding not to end his own life, he still wrestled with trusting in God asking why God? Why did you make me like this? And he was so torn up by the fact that he had no one to look to. No example of someone who was afflicted the way that he was who could make something of their life. But his mom kept saying Nick God's gonna do something. God's going to do something in your life through you that He couldn't do through anyone else. And this mans name is Nick Vujicic. And when Nick Vujicic was 15 years old he heard John Chapter 9, the same gospel we just listened to and he heard that question the disciples asked – who sinned, this man or his parents? And he heard Jesus' reply. Neither sinned. This man experienced his wound so that the works of God might be manifest through him. And in that moment Nick said God spoke to his heart because the question Nick had always cried out was God why did you make me like this? And God answered him, but He responded with another question. His question was Nick do you trust me? Nick do you trust me that in the midst of your wounds, I know you've prayed for arms, you've prayed for legs your entire life, but in the midst of Me not giving you what you're asking for, not healing you, do you trust Me? Do you trust that actually you might not get the miracle, but you can be the miracle? Nick said his entire life changed that day because what needed healing most was not his arms or his legs, as real as that suffering was for him, what needed healing was Nick didn't trust God. And the answer God gave him was do you trust me which was crazy cause it's just another question. But from that day Nick Vujicic knew that he would never lack trust in the Lord again. That he would be able to go through this life with no arms with no legs, but with a heart that the Lord, with His grace, had knit back together

within him. Cause he even said this, he said there's no point in God healing you on the outside if you're still unhealed on the inside. There's no point in God healing you on the outside if you remain broken on the inside. And Nick has gone all over the world telling people about Jesus. He's spoken to something like 400-500 thousand people many of whom have come to trust Jesus through Nick's presence. Through Nick's word, through his witness because yes he is unique in a sense that he was born with no arms and no legs and the man in the gospel was unique in that he was born blind but we're all in the same boat. Every one of us in that we all have trust that has come apart because of something in this life. Parts that question and struggle in the midst of their pain. And when people see Nick, now what they see is the works of God made manifest on this earth. Because they see someone who has not let his surface wounds, which are real and are terrible, steal his interior trust and peace in the Lord. There was conference recently and Nick had said one of the biggest pains was that he never had someone, anyone to look to when he was growing up. Like who else is broken in the way that I am? And at a conference where he was talking about how we can trust God and His love for us, there was a father with a newborn son and he brought his son up to Nick and this baby boy had no arms and no legs. And he said my son has hope. I have hope for my son because of you. I can still trust God in the midst of this real suffering because of you. And Nick knew the words that he had heard that one day were true that if you don't get the miracle, you can still be the miracle. Because our wounds are real, and this world is broken in a real way, but God wants to go beyond the surface wound and go deeper than the problem that might be on display and get to what truly needs His healing. Because maybe I've lost trust or I've lost hope or I've forgotten the fact that God does love me. And so in this mass my invitation is just to remember. Remember that God shows up and maybe He doesn't provide the answer we want, that God shows up and maybe we don't receive the healing that we desire, God shows up and doesn't always give us what we want but God does show up! In a world and in our heart or our soul that has come apart, God show up in Jesus and addresses those deeper things. And He can knit our hearts back together so that we can trust and we hope as He heals those deeper wounds.

Amen