

Homily for the Fourth Sunday of Lent

March 22, 2020

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Have you ever stopped to think what it would be like to lose your sight? Never again to see your parents smiling at you, never to see the red radiance of a sunset or the brilliance of a flowering springtime. We would truly miss these sights – at one moment seeing, and the very next moment blind.

In today's Gospel, we enter into that dark world of a man who was never able to see. He is the man born blind. We see him begging by the side of the road – minding his own business – when Jesus, with all the compassion in His heart, enters into his world. Jesus seeks him out and heals him. But note the healing process. Jesus could have touched his eyes or simply spoken a word to cure the man. But no, He makes clay with His saliva, smears it on the man's eyes and tells him to wash it off in the Pool of Siloam.

Why do you think He went through this ritual? I believe that Jesus wanted the man to take part in his own healing. And we see the blind man display trust, act immediately, and his sight is restored. What an amazing example of faith!

Jesus is constantly seeking us out also, wanting a relationship with us. He even gives us His precious Body and Blood. Do we hear Him, clearly see Him, believe in Him and respond in faith? He requires us to be open to His words and take charge of our own healing process. But thankfully that's not the end of this story.

This man was not only physically blind but spiritually blind as well. We see Jesus deliberately seek this man out a second time after he is rejected by the Pharisees. As Jesus reveals Himself to the man, we see his spiritual progression: he first identifies Jesus as "He, the man", then as "prophet" and finally as "Lord", culminating in a final act of worship. The man demonstrates that he has gained something more valuable than physical sight – he has gained spiritual sight.

A blind man can miraculously see, and he realizes that the sight he will prize his whole life – the most beautiful thing he will ever lay eyes on – is the One who healed him.

The second miracle, that of gaining spiritual sight, is even more amazing than the first. For the light that pours into the man's new eyes is nothing compared to the light that dawned in his soul. And the irony of it all is that the Pharisees who claim that they can see are really the ones who are blind, not understanding who Jesus is.

Today, Jesus seeks us out – in the messiness of our world right here, right now. He comes to wash our eyes of blindness so we can begin to see Him as the only Way, the only Truth and the only Life. In these days when we are isolated from one another and our anxiety builds, we can easily become blind to the work of God in our lives and miss what God is showing us in our isolation and our new way of living and working. It is so important to do our best to find God in all of this, and to acknowledge that God has not abandoned us. Being at home can be the time to see God in the things we do have and in the things we take for granted. Maybe reach out to family and friends. Spend time in private and individual prayer. Read Scripture and view uplifting spiritual videos on "Formed".

You see, we might not be totally blind like the man in today's Gospel, but we all have our blind spots during this crisis. Have faith, and know that God is with us.

So, here we are in the middle of a very different Lent. We are accustomed to thinking of Lent as a time to do without something, a time to discipline ourselves. And certainly this is true. But let's make this particular Lent a season of grace and renewal, a time to let the Lord into our hearts and to receive His merciful healing of our spiritual blind spots through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Don't be afraid - God is with us. And if you can't logistically make it to Confession in the weeks ahead, simply call on God's mercy and ask for His forgiveness. And then return to the Sacrament when the situation permits. He will never turn His back on us, no matter when or where.

Wouldn't it have been sad if, after Jesus had healed the man born blind, He had never opened his spiritual eyes. Let it not be so for us either. Let the disruption of our normal routine allow us to find new ways to encounter God in the "down time".

Our challenge during these weeks is to look into the face of Jesus and keep our eyes on the Lord. If we do this, everything else will find its rightful place. He is our model, He is the One who seeks us out with His grace, and He is the One who can heal us of our spiritual blindness. He is the Physician of our souls.