

Lent - 4th Sunday - John 9:1-41

- Today's readings are all about seeing and sight.
 - And the most important thing to see is Jesus Christ.
 - So why can some people so plainly see who Jesus is...while others are so blind?
 - Let's look at our Gospel for the answers.
- Upon first meeting the blind man...the disciples ask a question:
 - Whose sin is responsible?
 - And what does the Lord do with that question?
 - He changes their focus doesn't He?
 - They're looking at either his sin or that of his parent's...
 - but the Lord wants their focus...squarely on Him.
 - And so He responds:
 - *"Neither he nor his parents sinned;*
 - *it is so that the works of God might be made visible through him"*
 - So that others might see what I'm about to do.
 - And doesn't that bring sudden hope...into a hopeless situation?
 - After all...at that time...
 - whoever heard of someone who's blind...
 - ever regaining their sight?
- Now...despite what the Lord says...sin is the cause of his blindness.
 - Remember...it's because of the sin of our 1st parents...of Adam and Eve...
 - that sickness and death...
 - entered into our experience of life.
 - So sin to blame...
 - just not personal sin in this case...as it was with others that Jesus healed.
 - Like the lame man...in the 5th chapter of John.
 - Do you remember what Jesus told him?
 - *Go and sin no more, so that nothing worse may happen to you.*
 - And do you remember what Jesus' first word was...
 - as He began His public ministry?
 - Repent!
 - So there's little doubt that sin has a very important part to play even here.
 - In fact it's so obvious...
 - that it's just a given...
 - it shouldn't even...need to be said...
 - because Jesus wants their entire focus on Him...
 - on what He's about to do.
 - *"so that the works of God might be made visible..."*
 - so that all might see His glory.
 - After all...He says...
 - It's dark enough in the world...
 - So I have come to bring My Light.

- And so the man is healed...
 - He can see...
 - But at first...even he...can't clearly see who Jesus is.
 - Notice there's a progression.
 - He goes from having no clue who Jesus is...
 - to thinking He's just some prophet...
 - to finally and firmly knowing...
 - that Jesus is both...Messiah and Lord.
 - So it takes time for his spiritual eyes to come into focus.
 - That's important to remember.
- Another thing that stood out for me about this healing...was the way it takes place.
 - What Jesus does...let's be honest...it's pretty gross right?!
 - I mean...He spits in the dirt...
 - makes some clay...
 - then smears it in this poor man's eyes!
 - Well once we get past that...
 - Do you remember what else God did with clay?
 - Isn't that how He made Adam?
- So the sin of Adam is to blame for this man's condition...
 - but the way this man is healed...
 - it reaches all the way back beyond the Fall...
 - back to the first moment of creation itself.
 - The blind man of our Gospel is being recreated...from the 'ground' up...
 - and all by the light and grace of Jesus Christ Himself.
- And why was He blind again?
 - That the works of God might be seen in Him!
 - And did it work? Could people actually see?
 - The Pharisees couldn't see the Lord at work...they remained blind.
 - Not even his own parents could see!
 - They kind of disown Him!
 - But hopefully we did...
 - along with the countless others who've heard this Gospel...
 - as it's been proclaimed down through the centuries.
 - And hopefully we also have a better understanding of how God works...
 - and...more specifically....
 - how He wants to work in our lives.
 - And so let's apply this Gospel to our life right now.
- Looking back...how did Lent start...what's the very first thing we did?
 - We gathered as a Church on Ash Wednesday.
 - And much like the disciples...where was our focus?
 - on our weakness...on our sin:
 - *"Remember that you are dust [you are weak...fragile...mortal] and to dust you shall return!"*

- Thankfully...the Church doesn't call us priests...to spit on some dirt!
 - But we do sprinkle Holy Water on Ashes...
 - and then smear it...all over our foreheads.
 - Sure it's a remembrance of the past...
 - a time of grieving for our sin.
 - But...after the example of our Gospel...isn't it also a sign of hope?
 - It signals what the Lord...is about to do in each of our lives.
 - By cooperating with Jesus' grace...
 - through our Lenten practices...
 - we are being recreated in Him.
- And can't we easily apply all of this...to the state of our world right now?
 - Whenever a pandemic or plague strikes...
 - over the course of salvation history...
 - throughout modern and biblical times...
 - Each time a pandemic strikes...
 - it's our loving God...boldly proclaiming...
 - you need to repent!
 - In fact that line of thinking...
 - is so consistent over the course of time...
 - that it's just a given...
 - it shouldn't even...need to be said.
 - And none of us can look at their individual sins and say...
 - I was angry at my spouse...
 - or I looked at another with lust...
 - or I participated in gossip...
 - and that's why our economy is tanking...
 - that's why we have COVID-19.
 - But we can definitely say...that 'we' as a people...
 - that 'we' as a Church and our world...
 - we have all wandered so far from the Lord and His ways.
 - and that is having a cumulative effect.
 - It needs to change.
 - And so God is shouting at us...
 - Out of His loving concern for both our present and eternal good...
 - *You're only hurting yourselves by your current actions...*
 - *It doesn't have to be this way...*
 - *You need to turn back. Repent!*
 - And that means that 'we' as individuals...
 - we need to go to confession...
 - or if you can't make it now...
 - make a good act of contrition until you can.
 - because the healing of an entire culture...
 - always begins with 'me'...with 'us' as individuals.

- But again...all of that is a given...
 - In fact...it should be so obvious...
 - it shouldn't even...need to be said...
 - we will do our own individual part. We have to.
 - But...based on what we've learned from the Gospel...
 - where does Jesus want our focus and attention?
 - On Him of course...not on the world as things fall down around us...
 - On Him...and all the glorious things...He's about to do in our midst.
 - He wants us to be people of great hope!
 - Like the man born blind...
 - What I believe is happening around us right now...
 - is that Jesus wants to heal our society as a whole.
 - He wants to reform us from the ground up as it were.
 - And so He is shaking us to our very foundation.
 - So things will get much worse...before they get better.
 - It doesn't take a prophet to say so...
 - And it might take some time...
 - for our own spiritual eyes to come into focus...
 - and for us to be able to see...and more fully understand that...
 - all of the things that the Lord is doing in our midst...
 - that they really are for our good...
 - and will ultimately bring glory to Him.
 - The Cross always does...it always leads to the resurrection.
- I want to leave you with a few quotes from scripture to pray with over the coming days and a few more direct and personal thoughts of my own.
 - The first one comes from **Luke 12:32ff**
 - After talking about how we have no reason to worry about our daily needs...and that our Heavenly Father wants to...and will...provide for us.
 - Jesus says this: *"Do not be afraid any longer, little flock, for your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your belongings and give alms. Provide money bags for yourselves that do not wear out, an inexhaustible treasure in heaven that no thief can reach nor moth destroy. For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be."*
 - You will be tempted - a lot - to worry about money and your daily needs.
 - Each time you do...take your eyes off yourself...and put them back on the Lord.
 - Easier said than done! It's a grace. So ask for it every day!
 - *Heavenly Father, give me the grace of keeping my focus on You and not on my worries and fears.*
 - And when you are in the thick of that spiritual battle...
 - small...simple prayers...said over and over again...are best...
 - *Jesus, I trust in you! Jesus, I trust in you! Jesus, etc.*
 - Say that prayer from the Divine Mercy image over and over again...lifting your eyes off yourself and back on Him.

- Another passage comes from **1Kings 17**
 - It's the story of Elijah, the Widow of Zarephath and her son.
 - When she met Elijah...because of a severe famine...she had just enough flour and oil to make one more piece of bread...and then she knew - she knew! - that she and her son were going to die.
 - Talk about a hopeless situation!
 - But instead of saving that last bit for herself...she gave it all to Elijah...and the Lord miraculously multiplied it...so that there was more than enough for the three of them to survive on for a long, long time.
 - Be generous during these times and the Lord will do the same for you.
 - And finally, I want to leave you with another great passage to keep in mind when big, seemingly biblical things, are happening all around us. It's **Luke 21:26-28**
 - After talking about the world falling down around us...Jesus says this:
 - *“People will die of fright in anticipation of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken...But when these signs begin to happen, stand erect and raise your heads because your redemption is at hand.”*
 - There is a vast chasm between being terrified and being almost excited about what is to come. And the only bridge to get us across that huge chasm is faith. Another great grace to pray for every day!
 - For people of faith...there is great hope in every seemingly hopeless situation...so we must keep their eyes fixed on the Lord.
- Lastly, on a personal note...
 - I want to thank all of you who have reached out to share your concern, your encouragement and your prayers.
 - Some of you have said you could 'hear' me as you read my homily notes...
 - so I'll keep up the format!
 - As things have been cancelled...my life has actually gotten busier...I'm sure that's also true for many of you.
 - There's a lot going on here...
 - with the need for decisions around what to do in our parish...
 - and all the communication and prayer that comes with all that.
 - Let alone all my other assignments...
 - that I'm still able to do for the most part.
 - As a result...my time 'off'...has only become much more full!
 - So thank you for your prayers which sustain me in God's wisdom and grace!
 - We are all going to need that in the coming days.
 - And don't forget what I said in last week's 'homily'...
 - We need to dedicate some of this time in prayer like the apostles...
 - gathered with Our Blessed Mother in the Upper Room before Pentecost...begging the Holy Spirit to fill us with much needed grace.
 - This world is going to need many things coming up...

- and we will all be called to spring into action in many unexpected ways...
 - but if we do not pray...to paraphrase Mother Teresa...we will be too poor to help the poor! We need His grace!
 - I knew in my heart that the cancellation of public Masses was coming...
 - but I honestly thought we had another week.
 - I actually thought that estimate was pushing it.
 - And it was deeply emotional for me...when I first got the official word.
 - It brought me to tears.
 - But things are happening rapidly now.
 - And perhaps they will seem even more out of control in the coming days...
 - but all of this really is just the Lord's plan for our salvation...
 - being carefully...and meticulously...put into action.
 - He cares for us...and loves each of us so very dearly...
 - He's working out our salvation...
 - one loving step at a time.
 - So trust in Him!
- God bless you all!
 - Know that you remain in my prayers and thank you for yours!