

4th Sunday of Lent – March 22, 2020

Homily by Fr. Valentine

In today's Gospel, a man who was born blind was healed by Jesus. But instead of great rejoicing a great controversy erupted because Jesus had healed the man on the Sabbath. The Law was clear. By God's command, people were to rest from work because on the seventh day of creation, God himself had rested after all His work. From sundown on Friday to sundown on Saturday observant Jews did not (and still do not) work. The Lord's day was given over to rest, prayer, worship and to the important Friday evening meal known as the Seder, commemorating Israel's liberation from slavery in Egypt by God. Each week, all of this brought balance and perspective to life. This is the holy rhythm of balancing perspiration with inspiration we could say. The Sabbath was a great gift. As a Jewish commentator once said, "It wasn't Israel that kept the Sabbath, it was the Sabbath that kept Israel," meaning that it kept Israel together, kept them faithful to God and it kept them moving in the right direction.

We Christians have inherited the spirituality of Sabbath from our Jewish ancestors. Since Jesus was raised on Sunday, Sunday is the Lord's day for us. It is meant to do the same things for us. It is meant to keep us together, keep us faithful to God and keep us moving in the right direction. As Jews found out over the centuries, keeping together doesn't always include being physically together. Right now, during this pandemic, though physically distanced, we may actually be closer in mind, heart, spirit, and concern for each other than usual. We can be deeply united by our mutual faith in Christ and our common experience of His love and mercy for us all.

Healing a man's blindness on a Sabbath was a powerful way of showing us that the Lord's day is also meant to clear our vision and sharpen our eyesight for all that is good and holy. It's meant to heal the blind spots that allow us not to see each other's needs, or the needs of our own souls. It's meant to help us see Christ standing close to us in every blessing and in every burden in life. Wherever we are right now and whoever we are with, or without, it is still the Sabbath, the Lord's day.

So, with the man in today's Gospel let us say to Christ, "Lord, we do believe in you. Open our eyes so that we can see people and things the way you see them with hearts overflowing with your compassion and love."

Mass Readings:

1st Reading: 1Sm 16:1b,6-7, 10-13a

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 23:1-3a, 3b-4,5,6

2nd Reading: Eph 5:8-14

Gospel: Jn 9:1-41