

# *The Paper Pulpit*

*(Reflections from the Pastor)*

## **4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent**

Welcome Fr. Patrick Foley to St. Max's to celebrate our Lenten Retreat. We look forward to you leading us in our spiritual journey this coming weekend and week. May the Lord bless you.

**Scripture:** We are bombarded in images and pictures. Movies, television and the Internet have given us pictures and images in a dazzling array unknown to the generations that have preceded us on this earth. There's an old proverb that tells us there are none so blind as those who think they see. Blindness ought to concern us, particularly those among us who were baptized when we were infants and who grew up in our formative years attending Catholic schools or religious education classes. I'm sure we all recognize the gospel reading of the man born blind is not simply an account of physical blindness and the recovery of eyesight a physical healing of Jesus. The real cure has to do with spiritual blindness. The truth is that we don't see at all well when it comes to both seeing God and seeing other people. Beyond that there is the matter of seeing the deeper realities hidden within the people and events that we encounter during our lives here on earth. Today's gospel reading is about blindness. It causes me to suggest that you and I need to look at the answers to some important questions: What are we looking at? What should we be looking at? What are we looking at that we should not be looking at?

What are we looking at? Each day there are many things that clamor for our attention. We give our attention to things that are distracting, trivial, unimportant, or entertaining. It's a sort of voluntary blindness. When we go on the Internet, what sites do we visit and how often? Cell phones and texting are likewise useful to keep us from looking at what is truly more important. What are we looking at that we should not be looking at? More and more people are compulsively addicted to viewing inappropriate Internet sites. Others spend an inordinate amount of time checking stock market information. Some are addicted to sports.

There are other important things we should be looking into. Our relationships with our families: Many of us have not given much attention to our relationships with husbands, wives, or children. Neglecting serious examinations of them leads to family miseries. We need to give our relationships our close attention. The most important thing we need to look at is our relationship with God. It goes without saying that a lot of unhappiness is found in the lives of those who simply set God aside. They think they will get around to paying attention to God "later," and later never comes around, often until it's too late. We need to look at the "now" in our relationship with God.

An important vision connected to this has to do with how we see ourselves. All too often people make snap judgments, superficial judgments about what God is doing in their lives. At a shallow level they simply assume they know what God's doing. They come to false assessments of what God is doing because they have not seriously prayed over the matter; they have not made a discernment based on some contemplation and meditation that gives them a vision of God and His works throughout both human history and what He has been doing throughout their lives. The secret to having good insight, inner sight, inner vision, is found in prayer, in spending time with God trying to see things as He sees them. If you take this route you will have some wonderful surprises. You'll begin to see beauty in others, a beauty that others and we ourselves often miss because we have eyes to see but don't really see. In spending some quiet time alone with God you will see God's gifts in your life.

St. John's Gospel is filled with references to light and darkness, blindness and vision, seeing and not seeing. The old proverb: "None are so blind as those who refuse to see," comes to mind. We might add: "None are so blind as those who are too busy to see." Lent is now half over. The good news is that half of Lent lies in front of us, giving us, in God's good graces, more chances to utilize the time remaining in paying attention to what we see and don't see, and what we ought to take a good look into the mirror-the spiritual mirror.

**Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help:** Thank you Mary Shea for organizing our trip to the Shrine of our Lady of Good Help and then to Lambeau Field. It was a great trip and should promise to be the first of many more. Where next – the National Shrine of St. Maximilian Kolbe and a visit to the seminary where I attended or the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe and a tour of the cathedral in La Crosse or anyone have another idea?

**Diocesan Annual Appeal:** You have until this Monday for any donation made to the diocesan annual appeal to be matched by three generous donors (up to \$4500). Money must be in the parish office by this Monday, March 31, for the match. Thank you to everyone who has pledged. So far you have responded tremendously. I ask that every family pledge.

*Sincerely, Fr. Jim Trempe*