

Homily for the Fourth Sunday of Lent

Laetare Sunday

22 March 2020

Sacred Heart – St. Louis Parish

Reading 1 – 1 Samuel 16:1B, 6-7, 10-13A

Psalm 23 - **The Lord is my shepherd, there is nothing I shall want.**

Reading 2 – Ephesians 5:8-14

Gospel – John 9:1-41 **The Man Born Blind**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

This Sunday we gather together in a different way than we typically do. We will gather at our computer screens to reflect upon the sacred mysteries of our salvation instead of in our parish church where we typically gather each Saturday evening or Sunday morning. This will certainly be very strange for me as a pastor to celebrate one Sunday Mass instead of four. But the part that will be the most difficult will be not seeing all of the people, each one of you. Sunday Mass is often the only time that I get to see a majority of the people in the parish and to have that moment to check in with each of you. Be assured that as I celebrate Mass on Sunday, that each of you are in my prayers and I ask that we all pray not only for our parish and our community, but also for the safety of the whole world during these challenging days. Please be sure to check in regularly with the parish website www.shstl.org for updated information, schedules and other information, and for homilies each day.

Looking at the reading that we encounter there are two things that stand out that I want to touch on a bit. The first is the Responsorial Psalm. On this first weekend where there will really be no public mass in our country and in most of the world, we hear the Lord speaking to us these familiar words; “The Lord is my shepherd ...” Secondly, we encounter the gospel story from John of the man that was born blind and how Jesus healed him and restored his sight.

It never ceases to amaze me that whenever we need God to speak to us with words that give us comfort, He does. As I looked at the readings that we have for this Fourth Sunday of Lent, the first thing that stood out were these words that we long to hear every time that we find ourselves in times of turmoil or distress. The familiar words, "the Lord is my Shepherd, there is nothing that I shall want." I know that there are many people out there right now that have so many worries and concerns right now. Not to mention being afraid. The things that have taken place in this past week and the restrictions that have been placed upon our communities is something that I have never seen or experienced in my life. I am sure that many of us are in the same situation. People have and are losing their jobs. You go to the store and there are no groceries on the shelves, the kids are out of school, sports and activities are cancelled, vacation and a week away to another state are no more. The list can go on and on. The list seems to always go on and on. Sometimes we wonder if there will ever be an end. All of these activities can overwhelm us. We are in the ship out on the stormy seas once again. We long for the boat to stop rocking, for the wind to die down. The waters are stilled because the Lord God is there. The Shepherd is there to protect his sheep, the sheep of his flock. We are his sheep and during these Lenten days, we must draw near to him and know that there is nothing that we shall want or need, He will provide for all our wants. We must trust and draw near to him, even more so now.

The second point I would like to reflect upon for a moment comes from the gospel and the story of the man born blind. The man that has never seen. So often we are like this blind man, not being able to see. What are we blind to? We are blind in seeing that God is shepherding us and we will be given what we need. So, often we are blind to where God is also leading us. How can we follow the path were God is leading if we are blind to him? When we are blind to God we can get lost and we fall away from him.

It can be hard for many of us to really be able to imagine what it must be like to not have sight. To not be able to see all of the things around us. Take for instance being able to see the new spring life that is bursting forth from the ground all around us. The beauty of the first spring flowers and clear blue sky. What about the more practical things in life, how

would you see to get around your house and community? What would you do for a living? Your ability to work would be limited.

Thankfully most of us will never have to experience losing our eyesight. But that does not mean that we are not blind. There are still many things that we can often end up overlooking and not seeing. One area in our lives that we are often blind to is in regard to our sins. Often it can be so hard for us to see the sinful things that we do each and every day. We are blind to how little time we really spend with our family, with God and in prayer. We are blind to how much time we spend working and over-working. We are blind to the ways that we are neglectful to our spouses or parents. We are blind to the way that our infidelities have led us to break promises and commitments. We are blind to the way that we use our bodies and the bodies of others for our own pleasures and needs. We are blind to the way that we forget those that have grown older and are no longer of any use to us. We blind to the lonely and the afraid. Again, the list can go on and on. Yes, another list.

Sometimes we are blind to these things on purpose. Sometimes we are blind because we do not know any better or we do not want to know any better. When we don't know that something is a sin, then we don't have to stop right?

Lent is a time for conversion. Lent is a time to return to the Lord and commit once again to living that life that Christ won for us through his life, death, and resurrection. This Lent, we have been given an opportunity to really slow down and listen to what God is trying to tell us. Because with everything that is going on all around us, he is certainly trying to tell us something. What is it? What does he want us to see? In order for us to see let us ask Jesus to heal our sight, so that we can see what is being revealed to us. Once we can fully see what God is showing us, then we can repent and make reparation for our ways and truly be able to return to him.

Father James