

The Bells of St. Mary's The Church of the Immaculate Conception

Fourth Sunday of Lent
March 22, 2020

From Fr. Anthony Ekanem, MSP

~ CHRIST, THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD ~

Lent can seem burdensome with its emphasis on repentance and sacrifice, and especially this year that we are facing a virus pandemic. What do we do, how do we face it? Our theme, Laetare Sunday, is one way to look with anticipation and joy to its end at Easter. Jesus' resurrection is that light at the end of the tunnel - that light that brings relief and hopes to our suffering world. We are encouraged to pray for more effective ways in this tunnel of darkness and, in this midway of our Lenten journey, healing of both our spiritual and physical blindness.

As we did last week, we are reading today from the Gospel of John. In today's Gospel, the healing of the man born blind invites us to focus on the physical and spiritual aspects of sight and light. In the first part, we hear Jesus' response to a prevalent belief of his time: that misfortune and disability were the results of sin. That widespread belief of their time is one reason why Jesus answered the question back to them, 'of whose sin caused the man's blindness' — his own or his parents'. Jesus does not answer directly but instead gives the issue an entirely different dimension—through this man's disability, God's power will be made manifest. Jesus then heals the man.

This healing is controversial because Jesus heals on the Sabbath. The Pharisees, the religious authorities of Jesus' time, understood that the law of Moses forbade work (including healing) on the Sabbath. They also have trouble believing that Jesus performed a miracle. To determine whether the man was born blind, the Pharisees question him and his parents. The man challenges the leaders of the synagogue about their assessment of the good that Jesus has done. In turn, they expel the man for questioning their judgment.

The final revelation and moment of enlightenment come when the man born blind encounters Jesus again. Having heard the news of his expulsion, Jesus seeks out the man blind He healed and reveals Himself to him as the Son of Man. At this moment, the man born blind shows himself to be a man of faith and worships Jesus. Jesus replies by identifying the irony of the experience of many who encounter Jesus: Those who are blind will now can see, and those who think they now see will not.

As in last week's Gospel about Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman, today's reading has many allusions to Baptism. The washing of the man in the pool of Siloam is a prototype for Christian Baptism. Through the man's encounter with Jesus, the man born blind receives his sight, and his conversion to discipleship begins. The man born blind gradually comes to a greater understanding about who Jesus is and what it means to be His disciple, while the Pharisees (those who should see) are the ones who remain blind.

You and I are like the people in this story: there are certain things to which we are blind, regarding which we lack insight. Sometimes this is willful blindness due to fear - we see this in our national debate regarding immigration policy, our political affiliation. Sometimes our lack of insight is due to ignorance, wrong information, lack of historical perspective, strong feelings, but little knowledge, which keeps us from seeing how in some issues - just like in today's Gospel with the Pharisees, and even the parents of the man born blind. Sometimes, standard rules do not apply. That is Jesus' message today, "so that the works of God might be made visible through him."

Sometimes we are blinded by hatred or pride. But it need not be that way. Jesus is the "Light of the World," and He invites us to be like the man He heals in today's Gospel who stands out courageously to give testimony of his eyesight and his new insight.

Our humble prayer today is, Lord, that I may receive the gift of sight and rejoice to follow you.

Prayer to the Virgin Mary for Protection

O Mary, you shine continuously on our journey as a sign of salvation and hope.

We entrust ourselves to you, Health of the Sick.

At the foot of the Cross you participated in Jesus' pain,
with steadfast faith.

You, Our Lady of New York, know what we need.

We are certain that you will provide, so that,

as you did at Cana of Galilee,

joy and feasting might return after this moment of trial.

Help us, Mother of Divine Love,

to conform ourselves to the Father's will

and to do what Jesus tells us:

He who took our sufferings upon Himself, and bore our sorrows to bring us,

through the Cross, to the joy of the Resurrection. Amen.

We seek refuge under your protection, O Holy Mother of God.

Do not despise our pleas – we who are put to the test – and deliver us from every danger, O glorious and blessed Virgin.

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and deliver us from every danger, O glorious and blessed Virgin.

Stewardship

*Tithing - God's Plan for Giving on No collection offering last Sunday

Enroll in Parish Online Giving WeShare

Enrolling in online giving will simplify your budgeting while also providing our parish with consistent, reliable support. If you have not signed up yet, it's easy to get started! Visit We Share in the web site. <https://icmary.churchgiving.com/>

Reasons to Make Your Contribution Online

- No more checks to write or envelopes to find.
- Weeks of predictable income for your parish.
- Greater security than cash or checks.
- No cost for you to participate.
- Online control of your giving – including special collections.
- Reduction of envelope & postage expense for St Mary's. It costs us annually for parish contribution envelopes \$2,000 plus.
- Less work for our parish office staff to post contribution records (this allows them to do other things) & less mistakes in posting. This is both more efficient in time & salary so as to do other things.
- Offertory cards enable you to witness your gift of treasure. This way others know you are contributing by placing something into the collection baskets.
- Earn credit card points for your contributions.

Sundays Readings:

First Reading: 1 Samuel 16: 1b, 6-7, 10-13a p. 51

The LORD sent Samuel to Bethlehem to the house of Jesse, where Samuel was to anoint the new king of Israel. After Jesse presented each of his sons, the LORD instructed Samuel to anoint the youngest, David.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 23: 1-3a, 3b-4, 5-6 p. 52 The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

Second Reading: Ephesians 5: 8-14 p. 52 Live as children of light in goodness, justice, and truth. "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light."

Gospel: John 9: 1-41 p. 53 Jesus cured a man born blind. The Pharisees became upset because he did this on the Sabbath. After the Pharisees rejected the man's story, he met Jesus again. Jesus, "Son of Man," explained how the blind will see, but those who hold on to sin will remain in darkness.

Religious Education

No Classes of Religious Education March 21, 29, April 4, 2020

We will call everyone when Religious Education is back in schedule.

Prayers to all the families of St. Mary's Religious Education program. Continue praying and study your prayers. God Bless

Cardinal's Annual Stewardship Appeal

Update of 2020 Appeal Goals Goal: \$37,500 Pledged: \$ 20,655.00 Paid: \$13,093.00

Thank you so much for your cooperation again towards Cardinal's Appeal. Please, we are still in need of more support in order to reach our parish goal for 2020 as we have been doing.

Lenten Season is a good time to consider giving towards Cardinal's Appeal.

To donate you can go to cardinalsappeal.org, click on Donate, select an amount, and direct your gift to our Church:

#567 Immaculate Conception, Yonkers

Mass Intentions For the Week of
March 21 to March 29, 2020

Saturday, March 21, 2020:

12:05 pm - In Thanksgiving *Teresa Varkey

5:00 pm - Joanne Kunny + *Roseanne Jones

7:30pm - Acción de Gracias *Livia Torres

Sunday, March 22, 2020:

7:30 am - Martha Pisculli (Birthday) *Her Children

9:00 am - Carmen Celi. & Anibal Segundo Torres + *Livia Torres

11:00 am - Maxima Fagel (Birthday) *Espie Thompson

Monday, March 23, 2020:

8:15 am - Available/Disponibile

12:05 pm - Christina DeLaCruz + * Magaly Pichardo

Tuesday March 24, 2020:

8:15 am - Available/Disponibile

12:05 pm - Available/Disponibile

Wednesday, March 25, 2020:

8:15 am - Available/Disponibile

12:05 pm - Mahadai Dhuman+ *Christine Dako & Mac Harry

Thursday, March 26, 2020

8:15am - Available/Disponibile

12:05 pm - Carl & Vee Motta + *Son, George Motta

7:00 pm - Sunilda De Rojas + * Hijo y Familia

Friday, March 27, 2020:

8:15 am - Available/Disponibile

12:05 pm - Available/Disponibile

Saturday, March 28, 2020:

12:05 pm - Virgil Borrelli + * Wife Angelina

5:00 pm - Maura W. Ledrick * Catherine Reid

7:30pm - Kilmara Cortes * De Sus Hijos

Sunday, March 29, 2020:

7:30 am - For the Parishioners/Para los Parroquianos

9:00 am - Silvana Suárez * Paula Manzueta

11:00 am - Available/Disponibile

+Indicates deceased *Indicates the person (s) who requested the Mass.

You can watch Sundays at 11:00 Am Mass at www.icmary.com