

#### 4<sup>th</sup> (Laetare) Sunday of Lent Year A (2<sup>nd</sup> Scrutiny)

Our readings today abound with baptismal symbolism: *water, oil, light* and *newfound faith*. Jesus, in our gospel, restored the blind man's sight. Physical blindness for early Christians is a metaphor for the spiritual blindness that prevents people from recognizing and coming to Jesus. In our Gospel we encounter two kinds of blind people: One who is physically blind, who wanted to see; and the spiritually blind, who refused to see-the Pharisees, whom Jesus said, "*They have eyes but see not.*" This story testifies to the power of Jesus to heal not just the *blindness of the eye but also the blindness of the heart*. Jesus said, "*I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind.*" Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him, "*Surely we are not blind, are we?*" This mission statement of Jesus is valid not only for the Pharisees but also for us all. To learn from Jesus we must first *humble ourselves* and *admit our ignorance*. *To be healed we must first acknowledge our blindness. To have his forgiveness we need to confess our sins.* We need self-knowledge & self-acceptance. We need to know our strengths & weaknesses and **be open**. *Conquer your illusions and love the truth!*

Walking in downtown Seattle a couple met a beggar. Later the husband asked his wife, "*Why did you give so much money to the beggar who was pretending to be blind?*" Thrilled, the wife said, "*Didn't you hear his good words to me?*" "*NO, what did he say?*" asked the husband.

The wife replied, *“He said that I was so kind, so pretty and so young.”*

The husband looking at her said, *“Oh, I see. He really is blind!”*

Since the earliest period of the Church this Gospel story about the blind man has been linked with **baptism**. Just as the blind man went down into the waters of Siloam and came up whole, so as we are immersed into the waters of baptism come up spiritually whole—totally healed of the blindness with which we are born. For, like the blind man, we are all born blind – spiritually. This blind man who used to sit and beg became a **disciple and witness to Jesus**. His story of healing shows us that in order for us to qualify as witnesses of Jesus not only a certain level of knowledge is needed, but above all **a definite level of faith experience**. The life we receive at baptism gives us the opportunity to bring Jesus to every person we meet. By our good example we are giving direction to the lives of our brothers and sisters.

Lent is a suitable time to reflect on how we carry out and manifest our baptismal promises. *Are you friendly & welcoming to your neighbor?* If yes, you are reflecting Christ’s light. We close out the light of God’s love when we harbor those past differences. *Learn to establish a dialogue with someone whom you are not on speaking terms with.* Let us overcome the darkness of hatred and the blindness of jealousy and we will be able to find something good in one another. *What’s the use of our being here every Sunday if we are not bringing Jesus wherever we go?*

The crisis of faith in our time is not very different from the crisis of faith

of the Pharisees'. *That true piety means knowing and following the book.* As Christians knowing and following the teachings are indeed good, but they are best when we truly manifest them in relation to our love of God and our neighbor.

*Why do some fail to live up to that commitment?* Ironically, the Pharisees who claim they know everything have their minds darkened because they close their hearts to Jesus. They cannot see *'the finger of God'* working in the cure. Instead they continue calling Jesus a lawbreaker because he cures on the Sabbath. They go as far as pressuring the parent of the blind man and finally expelling him from their synagogue because of his witness to Jesus. *"The eyes are useless when the mind is blind."* The most difficult to awaken are people who only *pretend to sleep*, the most difficult to teach are those who think *they know everything*, the most difficult to lead are those who *claim they know the way*. *Are you convinced you know the ways of God and yet look down on others?* You are not far from their category. That pride will slowly turn into hardness of heart. *"If today you hear God's voice harden not your heart."* *Do you have the humility to accept your need of healing? **Go to Jesus, He will make you see.***

Despite the increasing antagonism against him, the blind man's perception of Jesus grew. First *he knows him only as a man called Jesus*. Then *he considers Jesus as a man from God*, and finally as *"Lord" whom he worships. **Just because the man lacks the use of his***

*eyes doesn't mean he lacks vision.* When it comes to **foresight some of us are legally blind.** *Are you aiming for eternal life? A 20/20 vision is needed.* Jesus is asking us to look at our blind spots because coming from darkness into light is not an easy journey. It takes time and requires patience because of the many obstacles on the road. Let the words of St. Paul remind us, *"You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord... Live as children of light."* In spite of our best resolutions the light of Christ has a tendency to grow dim within us. Jesus knows our weaknesses and is willing to help us. Let us admit our spiritual blindness and pray **"Lord that I may see." Amen!**