

Fr. Joe's Homily for the Fourth Sunday of Lent.

First Reading: I Samuel 16: 1b, 6-7,10-13a

Second reading: Ephesians: 5: 8-14

Gospel: John 9: 1-41

Although we are not physically close, we are spiritually close and united with the whole church and the world in prayer. I offered this Mass especially for the St. Therese Parish community and their intention.

Introduction:

Gospel Reading:

The Gospel of today is so powerful in its themes as well as in its meaning. Jesus heals a man who was born blind. The man receives not only physical healing but also the gift of faith in Jesus. It also reveals the spiritual blindness of the people who refuses to see and believe in spite of clear evidence. To me it is an invitation to confront our own darkness and blindness and to seek God's help and healing. So I invite you all to prayerfully read and reflect on this Gospel.

Homily:

Right at the beginning of the gospel story Jesus rejects and clarifies a misunderstanding prevalent at the time and that is true even today. Seeing the blind man, the disciples asks, "Whose fault is it?" that the man is blind. Jesus rejects such attributes saying, neither he nor his parents sinned; it is so that the works of God might be made visible through him. It is not that bad things happen to bad people, and good things happen to good people. Jesus can make use of our weakness

and failures as a means of revealing God's power and mercy. We need to trust and come to him in humility and faith.

We might think that the gospel story has not much relevance for us since we are not physically blind. But the question is how well do we see the truth? The blind man in the Gospel story saw more than the religious leaders. It is made clear in the Gospel story. The healed man at first describes Jesus, as **the man** called Jesus. But then later on he refers to him as "he is a **prophet**", to the question, of the Pharisees who asked him, "what do you say about him?" Then at the end of the story, he acknowledges him as the Son of Man, and calls him **Lord**, "I do believe **Lord**" and worshipped him, a clear expression of his faith. At the same time the Pharisees who could see physically refuses to see and believe. It is said that the greatest tragedy is not to be born blind, but to have eyes and yet fail to see. Worse still is to have eyes and refuse to see. This was the situation of the Pharisees.

We must not think that blindness is an illness that affects the eyes only. There are many forms of blindness we experience in our lives that can equally cripple us. For example:

Our selfishness can blind us to the needs of others.

Our insensitivity can blind us to the hurt we are causing to others.

Our pride can blind us to our own faults. Our prejudice can blind us to the truth. Our business and hurry can blind us to the beauty and goodness that surround us. Materialism and our indulgence in it can blind us to the true spiritual values. Our superficiality blinds us to a person's true worth and causes us to judge by appearances.

We see not only with the eyes, we also see with the mind, the heart and the imagination. A narrow mind, a small heart, an impoverished imagination, all of these can distort our vision and darken our lives.

Through the gospel story we are reminded today that the most important eyes of all are the eyes of faith. The Gospel story is essentially a faith story- the story of a man who came to faith in Jesus. The climax of the story, as I mentioned earlier, is when the man makes a profession of faith, "Lord, I believe".

The man's journey from blindness to sight symbolizes the journey from unbelief to faith, which is a journey from darkness to light.

All of us are on a journey of faith. None of us are perfect in our faith. All of us are often challenged in our faith especially in these trying days as we face the pandemic of the corona virus. There is fear, anxiety and worry. We feel as if we are fumbling in the dark. Today through the gospel story Jesus is inviting us to come to him in faith and place our trust and confidence in him. No matter how weak or poor we may feel in our faith, the Lord can help us in our weakness and strengthen our faith. In the second reading today, we heard St. Paul speaking to the Ephesians, "once you were in darkness, but now you are in the light of Christ". And he invites them to live as children of light reflecting kindness, goodness and love. This is a great opportunity for us too to live as true children of light in this world of darkness. We need each other more than ever. Let us cast away all barriers forgive all hurts and reach out in reconciliation and peace. We need to help and support each other in our families, in our neighborhood and anywhere in any way we can especially through our prayers. Our faith will be a great source of energy for us. Without faith we are in deep night and do not

know where we are going. Faith helps us to find our way through the Chaos, confusion and darkness we are surrounded by. Faith enlightens us to see everything in a new way, through the eyes of God. Let us in faith turn to the Lord and ask him to strengthen our faith and also to protect us and the whole world from this calamity.

I want to conclude with a prayer during this Corona virus, composed by one of our Pallottine fathers Fr. Davies Edassery.

God our loving Father, we come to you in our desperate need to seek your protection against all dreadful diseases especially the Corona virus that threaten humanity. Many people and nations have been adversely affected and lives are being lost. We stand in solidarity with all people impacted by this disease including those infected, their families, healthcare providers and governments working to slow its spread. We pray for your grace for the people studying the nature and cause of this virus and are working to stem the tide of its transmission. Guide the hands and minds of medical experts to care for the suffering.

May your mercy come quickly to meet us. Grant us, O God our Savior, the strength and courage to face this fearful time with hope and trust in you. We implore you through the intercession of our Blessed Mother Mary, and all the saints and angels, especially through the merits of St. Vincent Pallotti, and St. Therese, to protect us from all dangers of life. Amen.