

Fourth Sunday of Lent – Year A

(1 Sm 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a; Eph 5:8-14; Jn: 1-41)

Laetare Sunday – A Sunday of joy and celebration! It means Rejoice with Jerusalem! We have almost completed our Lenten Journey! And today we certainly have a story to celebrate; a man was blind and now he sees- was lost and now is found!

Today, we hear **his** story as told by St. John, the story of a man, who, we know, has spent his whole life in darkness. Society had nothing to offer him but scorn because they thought, as witnessed by the question of Jesus' disciples that his blindness was caused by sins committed against God by him or his parents– a very common belief and sound theology for that time! Therefore he was left to beg for his meager existence and hope for a miracle.

But, this is not the only example of blindness we hear about today. The blind man suffered from physical blindness and was seen as an object of pity by many. Our attention is also called to the blindness of the Pharisees – a spiritual blindness that ultimately was more dangerous to them, **and to us**, than the physical blindness that handicapped the beggar.

Through the Grace of God, Jesus was easily able to cure the man's physical blindness and then allow the light of God to enter his heart. This gift of sight allowed him to "see" and experience the wonderful goodness of God's love and to express his new found faith in Jesus!

The Pharisees, on the other hand, inherited a kind of vision that would not allow them to "see" the goodness of Jesus and the gift that He brought to humanity. Their vision saw Him as an enemy, an opponent and threat to their way of living. Their eyes were closed to him because they lacked understanding and acceptance of why He was in their presence.

They were too hung up on rules – He did not "fit the Mold" of what their ancestors had told them to expect in a messiah! They had "hardened their hearts" to this person who healed on the Sabbath. They became as blind as the beggar in the street; but, unlike the beggar, they refused to accept what Jesus had to offer them.

Sometimes, we do too! Through our baptism, our eyes are opened, like the blind man, but, all too often we become blind like the Pharisees when we refuse to recognize the effect that Jesus can have on our lives and invite Him into our hearts. Instead, we, too harden our hearts.

Physical and spiritual sight can so easily be taken for granted until we lose it! Those who have been deprived of their physical sight can more fully appreciate what it means to regain that “sight”! The same is true for those who have lost their spiritual vision. We like the blind man or Pharisees need to have an eye opening experience. Lent can be just such an opportunity -if we take advantage of the “reason for the season” and share in the passion and suffering of our Lord.

It is up to each of us to make the time to walk the road to Jerusalem with Him; to meditate and contemplate His pain, humiliation and suffering on the way; and realize that He did it for us, then we will be able to “see” the gift that He has for us- the gift that He offers each of us- if we make the effort to accept it; that gift is our FAITH and it is our **responsibility** as Christians to care for, nurture, grow and SHARE this gift.

When we can do all of this, then we will understand the joy felt by the blind man after his encounter with Christ and then truly learn to celebrate the joy of this Laetare Sunday!

Dcn. Bill

4-3-11