

Fourth Sunday of Lent – March 26, 2017 – Good Shepherd Parish

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

The LORD said to Samuel: "Fill your horn with oil, and be on your way. I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem, for I have chosen my king from among his sons." As Jesse and his sons came to the sacrifice, Samuel looked at Eliab and thought, "Surely the Lord's anointed is here before him." But the LORD said to Samuel: "Do not judge from his appearance or from his lofty stature, because I have rejected him. Not as man sees does God see, because man sees the appearance but the LORD looks into the heart." In the same way Jesse presented seven sons before Samuel, but Samuel said to Jesse, "The LORD has not chosen any one of these." Then Samuel asked Jesse, "Are these all the sons you have?" Jesse replied, "There is still the youngest, who is tending the sheep." Samuel said to Jesse, "Send for him; we will not begin the sacrificial banquet until he arrives here." Jesse sent and had the young man brought to them. He was ruddy, a youth handsome to behold and making a splendid appearance. The LORD said, "There-anoint him, for this is the one!" Then Samuel, with the horn of oil in hand, anointed David in the presence of his brothers; and from that day on, the spirit of the LORD rushed upon David.

Psalms: Ps 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5-6

R. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. In verdant pastures he gives me repose; beside restful waters he leads me; he refreshes my soul.

He guides me in right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk in the dark valley I fear no evil; for you are at my side with your rod and your staff that give me courage.

You spread the table before me in the sight of my foes; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

Only goodness and kindness follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD for years to come.

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 5:8-14

Brothers and sisters: You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light, for light produces every kind of goodness and righteousness and truth. Try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the fruitless works of darkness; rather expose them, for it is shameful even to mention the things done by them in secret; but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for everything that becomes visible is light. Therefore, it says: "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light."

Gospel: John 9:1-41

As Jesus passed by he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither he nor his parents sinned; it is so that the works of God might be made visible through him. We have to do the works of the one who sent me while it is day. Night is coming when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva, and smeared the clay on his eyes, and said to him, "Go wash in the Pool of Siloam"-which means Sent. So he went and washed, and came back able to see. His neighbors and those who had seen him earlier as a beggar said, "Isn't this

the one who used to sit and beg?" Some said, "It is," but others

said, "No, he just looks like him." He said, "I am." So they said to him, "How were your eyes opened?" He replied, "The man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and told me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' So I went there and washed and was able to see." And they said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I don't know." They brought the one who was once blind to the Pharisees. Now Jesus had made clay and opened his eyes on a sabbath. So then the Pharisees also asked him how he was able to see. He said to them, "He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and now I can see." So some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, because he does not keep the sabbath." But others said, "How can a sinful man do such signs?" And there was a division among them. So they said to the blind man again, "What do you have to say about him, since he opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet."

Now the Jews did not believe that he had been blind and gained his sight until they summoned the parents of the one who had gained his sight. They asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How does he now see?" His parents answered and said, "We know that this is our son and that he was born blind. We do not know how he sees now, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him, he is of age; he can speak for himself." His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone acknowledged him as the Christ, he would be expelled from the synagogue. For this reason his parents said, "He is of age; question him." So a second time they called the man who had been blind and said to him, "Give God the praise! We know that this man is a sinner." He replied, "If he is a sinner, I do not know. One thing I do know is that I was blind and now I see." So they said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" He answered them, "I told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too?" They ridiculed him and said, "You are that man's disciple; we are disciples of Moses! We know that God spoke to Moses, but we do not know where this one is from." The man answered and said to them, "This is what is so amazing, that you do not know where he is from, yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if one is devout and does his will, he listens to him. It is unheard of that anyone ever opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, he would not be able to do anything." They answered and said to him, "You were born totally in sin, and are you trying to teach us?" Then they threw him out. When Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, he found him and said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" He answered and said, "Who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?" Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he." He said, "I do believe, Lord," and he worshiped him. Then Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment, so that those who do not see might see, and those who do see might become blind." Some of the Pharisees who were with him heard this and said to him, "Surely we are not also blind, are we?" Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you are saying, 'We see,' so your sin remains."

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Prayer for the Beatification of Servants of God Antonio Cuipa (Queepa) and Companions

O God, Father of all nations, you have summoned us to announce the freedom of your children. We thank you for calling your servants, Antonio Cuipa (Queepa) and his companions, to proclaim the Catholic faith during the birth of a new nation. May their example of suffering and forgiveness give us the courage to bear witness to Christ in our own time. We also pray that they be counted one day among your saints. Through the intercession of your Servants, grant us the following grace which we ask from your loving kindness. **(pause for a moment to make your prayer request, your prayer intention)** We ask this through Christ, our Lord, Amen.

INVITATION TO PRAY

Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God.

Proclaim the Scriptures out loud.

As you listen to the scriptures be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

INVITATION TO REFLECT

Sunday's Gospel is about the cure of a blind man—and about the blindness of those who think they can see. The healing takes place on the Sabbath: Jesus makes clay with his own saliva (an earthy detail) and sends the blind man to wash in the "Pool of Siloam." When he comes back, Jesus is not there anymore but the man's sight is! Confusion reigns among the bystanders. "This can't be the blind guy that used to sit and beg." "No, it is someone else." "Ok, but it looks just like him." And so on. They drag him to the Pharisees, and now confusion conquers all. "The law says thou shall keep the Sabbath holy," one Pharisee says. "Look at the facts. This Jesus fellow pretended to work a miracle on the Sabbath day. "Therefore he is a sinner and cannot have come from God." Another finishes the thought, "... so he certainly could not work a miracle!" They make up a rule for themselves: "Anyone who now can see must always have been able to see!" "Let's go get proof," they say. "His family must know he was never blind." They run and find the parents. But these reply blandly that their son certainly had been blind since he was born! Ouch!

Who can understand such a cure? Not you or me if we are protecting our place in the world.

So they go back to the man with a new strategy. They pretend that they believe in the cure and are fascinated by it. They pose a cynical question. "How did this Jesus accomplish such a wonderful miracle?" The blind man's tart reply is: "I told you already and you did not listen. Do you need to hear it again? Or is it that you want to be his disciples, too?" Sarcasm in the gospel! The Pharisees are outraged and they begin insulting the man. Why are these Pharisees so impassioned? Because they will lose their power and their wealth and control if Jesus actually has divine power. He will take over. They have to blind themselves to the truth or else. What is that truth? It's simple. Jesus has given not only sight but depth of sight to a man born without it. This is why the fellow was blind in the first place, Jesus tells us, so that the works of God could be made seeable. Does the man accept this? "I do believe, Lord," he says. His heart had been healed in addition to his eyes. Who can understand such a cure? Not the Pharisees. Not you or me if we are protecting our place in the world. They lusted for control over others, for respect and self-will. They need spittle put on their souls so they will see clearly. So do we. Surely, given the chance, we would act the same way. And that is why this long Gospel is presented now, during Lent, the time of preparation. You and I are preparing for a still greater healing at Easter, and we need to start washing out our souls to see it. Jesus will suffer from the world's blindness and will die from it. But the world, by killing him, will be healed from death and suffering, from hate and fear, healed by events that began with hatred itself. Jesus descended into darkness in order to open our eyes to a love stronger than dark.

INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING

1. Does the right grace come along with the call? What in this reading tells you that? When you feel you have been summoned to perform some task for God, what do you do? Assume that God will give you what you need to get the job done? Or back down at the thought of obstacles?
2. Is the Church present in every dark place that you think Christ would be if he were physically present in the world today? In which of those dark places can you find your parish working to bring light?
3. In the beginning of the Gospel, the blind man was simply a man on the street. By the end of the Gospel he was thrown out of the synagogue for defending Jesus. What changed him into a disciple? Which of these titles fits you: passer-by, believer, confessor, challenger or disciple?

INVITATION TO ACT

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another's openness and sensitivity. Conclude with the following:

Father of peace, we are joyful in your Word, your Son Jesus Christ, who reconciles us to you. Let us hasten toward Easter with the eagerness of faith and love. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen