

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT; Cycle – A; March 19th 2023
1Samuel 16: 1b, 6-7, 10-13; Ephesians 5: 8-14; John 9: 1-41

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Through the long episode of the physical healing of a blind man John presents us the second theme which is **Christ the Light**. Though the center of attention is on the physically blind person, John goes beyond that and shows how Jesus can heal our spiritual blindness which most important. The statement of Jesus, just before the healing of the blind man, gives us the key point in our celebration today. Jesus says, **“I am the light of the world, whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12)**. Jesus continues, **“While I am in the world, I am the light to the world” (John 9: 5)**.

Though we find only one physically blind man in the scene, we notice that all those who were gathered around Jesus were equally blind, though spiritually. The disciples were blind by holding the old Jewish concept that the man became blind because his parents may have committed some serious sins; the Pharisees were blind, for they could not see the mighty hands of God working here; the crowd was blind as they could not fully comprehend as what was taking place; the blind man’s parents pretended to be blind against this amazing miracle, for fear of the authorities. But Jesus has picked up only one physically blind. **First Jesus heals his physical blindness and in the second step he heals his spiritual blindness too.**

In this miracle Jesus never waited for the blind man to ask for the favor; rather he took the initiative to heal him. And also he went beyond his normal procedures of the healing and spat on the ground, made clay and applied it to the blind man’s eyes and asked him to go all the way to the pool of Siloam and wash. We don’t know why did Jesus use this ritual? We see Jesus using the spittle more than one occasion to open the eyes of the blind. People in the ancient world believed that spittle had the curative element in it. Perhaps John has a symbolic explanation for the pool of Siloam. The literal meaning of the word *Siloam* is ‘*sent*’ and according to John Jesus is the one **who is sent** and thus he is the true Siloam. So whoever approaches Jesus will be made whole.

The blind man’s healing is the 6th of the seven miracles of Jesus, described in John’s gospel. According to John all the signs or miracles of Jesus are meant to **manifest the identity of Jesus, his oneness with God and the salvation he alone can give**. Jesus, by healing the blind man physically, step by step, brings the man to the true understanding of the identity of Jesus. Before working this miracle, Jesus declares, *“While I am in the world I am the light of the world.”* Though, after washing in the pool

of Siloam the blind man could see physically, still he remained blind towards the true identity of Jesus. In order to help him Jesus had *to wash again his eyes in the pool of Siloam which is Jesus himself*.

This miracle episode is the clear symbol of our own journey of faith. We too were washed in the pool of Siloam which is the **baptismal pond**. The moment we were born in the world we were able to have the natural light. But we were spiritually blind to see the divine presence of Jesus. That is why at our baptism we were given the true light. The baptismal candle the priest presents to the baptized symbolizes the true light which is Jesus. Again by receiving the baptismal candle alone will never keep the true light shining in our lives. By living a life worthy of our Christian vocation, we have to keep the light burning always. Only through the Sacramental life we will be able to keep that true light burning in us and one day we ourselves will be able to reflect the true light of Jesus to the world. **That is what Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount in Mt. 5: 14, “You are the light of the world.”** Then Jesus gives us clear instruction as what should be our role as the light of the world. In that same chapter verse 16 Jesus says, **“Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.”** In other words we the baptized should be able to bring that true light to many who are still in darkness and have not met Jesus.

In today's second reading St. Paul describes beautifully the transformation we received in our baptism. **He says, “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 of truth.”** If we really produce goodness in our life, we are always in the light. You and I are not physically blind though most of us have a little vision loss due to our age. But like the disciples and Pharisees, perhaps we too are blind in many ways. We may be blind towards the day today blessings we receive from the Lord and may see only the bad things occasionally happening to our lives; so we fail to see the positive things in our lives; we may be blind towards the moral degradation and social evils mounting up in our society; we may be failing to see the good qualities of our brothers and sisters and appreciate them; we may be blind towards the genuine need of the poor and the suffering. In short we all need the true light from Jesus. As we know, the darkness is engulfing the lives of more and more people. The true light is vanishing from the individuals, families and world as a whole. To great extent we are responsible for our failure to keep the true light for our next generation. Jesus says in St. John's gospel, **“And this is the verdict, that the light came into the world, but people preferred darkness to light, because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light, so that his works might not be exposed.” (Jn. 3:19-20)).** Unfortunately, these days, people go after the light which lasts momentarily, leaving Jesus the true light which lasts forever.