

## **Fr. Jins' Homily for the Fourth Sunday of Lent, March 19, 2023**

### **John 9:1-41**

The Fourth Sunday of Lent is known as "Laetare (Rejoice) Sunday," expressing the Church's joy in anticipation of the Resurrection of our Lord. Today's readings remind us that it is God Who both gives us proper vision in body as well as in soul and instructs us that we should be constantly on our guard against spiritual blindness.

Sherlock Holmes and his smart assistant Dr. Watson go on a camping trip, enjoy a heavy barbeque dinner with a bottle of whisky, set up their tent, and fall asleep. Some hours later, Holmes wakes his faithful friend. "Watson, look up at the sky and tell me what you see." Watson replies, "I see millions of stars." "What does that tell you?" Watson ponders for a minute. "Astronomically speaking, it tells me that there are millions of galaxies and potentially billions of planets. Astrologically, it tells me that Saturn is in Leo. Timewise, it appears to be approximately a quarter past three. Theologically, it's evident the Lord is all powerful and we are small and insignificant. Meteorologically, it seems we will have a beautiful day tomorrow. What does it tell you?" Holmes is silent for a moment, then speaks. "Watson, you idiot, someone has stolen our tent!"— Watson had missed the most obvious observation. He was clever enough to notice the complexities of the stars, but he missed what was plain and simple. Today's Gospel reading is about a whole lot of people who miss the point. In Jesus' healing of a blind man, the Pharisees missed the most evident point that it was a real miracle by Divine intervention.

By describing the anointing of David as the second king of Israel, the first reading, taken from the First Book of Samuel, illustrates how blind we are in our judgments and how much we need God's help. It reminds us that those whom God involves in his saving plans are not necessarily those whom the world perceives as great. In the second reading, St. Paul reminds the Ephesians of their new responsibility as children of light "to live as children of the light, producing every kind of goodness and righteousness and truth." In today's Responsorial Psalm, (Ps 23), we celebrate the care of God, our Good Shepherd, who keeps us safe in the darkness of this world. Presenting the miracle of Jesus' giving of sight to a man born blind, today's Gospel teaches us the necessity of being willing to have our eyes opened by Faith, and warns us that those who assume they see the truth are often blind, while those who acknowledge their blindness are given clear vision. In this episode, the most unlikely person, namely the beggar born blind, receives the light of Faith in Jesus, while the religion-oriented, law-educated Pharisees remain spiritually blind. To live as a Christian is to see and to grow continually, gaining clearer vision about God, about ourselves and about others. Our Lenten prayers and sacrifices should help to heal our spiritual blindness so that we can look at others, see them as children of God, and love them as our own brothers and sisters, saved by the death and Resurrection of Jesus.

We need to allow Jesus to heal our spiritual blindness, physiologically, the "blind-spot" is the part of our eye where vision is not experienced. It is the spot where the optic nerve enters the eyeball. A blind spot in a vehicle is an area around the vehicle that cannot be directly observed by the driver. In real life, we all have blind-spots — in our marriages, our parenting, our work habits, and our personalities. We often wish to remain in the dark, preferring darkness to light. It is even possible for the religious people in our day to be like the Pharisees: religious in worship, in frequenting the Sacraments, in prayer-life, in tithing, and in knowledge of the Bible — but blind to the poverty, injustice, and pain around them. Let us remember, however, that Jesus wants to heal our blind spots. We need to ask Jesus to remove from us the root causes of our blindness, among them, self-centeredness, greed, anger, hatred, prejudice, jealousy, addiction to evil habits and hardness of heart. Let us pray with the Scottish Bible scholar William Barclay, "God our Father, help us see Christ more clearly, love him more dearly and follow him

more nearly” day by day.

We need to get rid of cultural blindness. Our culture also has blind-spots. Often it is blind to things like love, happiness, marriage, and true, committed sexual love in marriage. Our culture has become anesthetized to the violence, the sexual innuendo, and the enormous suffering of the world around us. Our culture, our media, our movies and our values, are often blind as to what it means to love selflessly and sacrificially. Our culture, in spite of scientific proofs, is blind to the reality that life begins at the moment of conception, and it callously promotes abortion. We continue to advance destructive practices such as embryonic stem-cell research, homosexual “marriages,” transgenderism, euthanasia, and human cloning, and we refuse to see the consequences of godless behavior on human society. In the name of individual rights, the radical left in our society decries any public demonstration of religious beliefs and practices, or the public appearance of traditional values, questioning the substance of family values. The radical right, on the other hand, decries the immorality of our times, without lifting a finger to help the poor and the underprivileged and without ever questioning unjust foreign policies and wars. This cultural blindness can only be overcome as each one of us enters the living experience of having Jesus dwelling within us and within others, through personal prayer, meditative reading of the Bible and a genuine Sacramental life.

Let us not allow the world and Satan to blind us so that we forget our identity and call, that we have been created by God and bought with the blood of Jesus; that we have been adopted as God’s chosen children; and, consequently, that our role is to become God’s representatives in our community and our world. We are called to “stand out” by the way we show love and concern for others. We are called to promote justice and peace; to set an example of what it means to live according to God’s way. We are called to discipleship – that means leading a disciplined life of prayer, the study of God’s Word, worship with our fellow Christians, and standing out in the crowd (even though that may be difficult to do), when it means sticking up for those who are being wronged and confessing that Christ in our lives does make a difference. It’s so easy to miss the point of what it means to be a Christian, and we end up “blending in” and fail to become a positive and powerful influence bringing about positive changes in people’s lives and in our world. Lent is a good time to take stock of how we are affected by this blindness, to see just how blind we have been to Jesus and His call to discipleship, and to realize how often we have preferred to stay blind. Lent is a good time to renew our vision and fix our eyes again on the Savior who came so that we can be assured of forgiveness for such blindness, for the times when Jesus has come to us through his word and we have been too blind to see him, and too deaf to hear him calling us to action. Let us pray for the grace to see and experience the presence of a loving and forgiving God.