Dear Parishioners,

 I want you to know how much I miss **all of you--our** school children, the interaction that takes place with you before and after the weekend Masses as well as praying and worshipping with you. I hope that we all will be together soon, until then let’s continue to stay well and get through this crisis. The lessons we learn will be valuable as we go forward.

 I have been asked to offer a reflection on this past Sunday’s Gospel. It was the story of Jesus healing the man born blind.

 I suspect some maybe asking: Why is this happening? Is God punishing us for our wicked ways? We may hear preachers telling us to repent because God is upset or angry with us. I have a slightly different take based on the Gospel. Jesus heard a slightly different question: Who is to blame for this man’s blindness--was it him or was it his parents?

 I remember when the AIDS virus first appeared and began to kill many people. Many Christian leaders blamed it on the gay community and their lifestyle. Unfortunately, many children and others outside the community were contracting this deadly killer, through no fault of their own. These same preachers had to rethink their notion that this was a pox on the gay community. It took science and medicine to not only find the cause of this deadly killer but to find treatments that prolong the lives of those affected by disease. It is still with us, but we have come a long way in terms of how we look at it.

 As Jesus encounters the blind man, there were a swirl of questions about the man’s situation-Was he being punished by God for his sins or the sins of his parents? It wasn’t a question unique to that period of time, but rather through the ages.

 Let’s think for a moment about the man and all those like him who were not born perfect who were born with some form of imperfection. What a terrible way to live, knowing they are different from those who are born “normal.” This was neither the fault of them nor their parents. Instead of appreciating their heroic sacrifices, we seem to only appreciate those who are heathy and whole. If only the good and whole are rewarded with the good things of this earth, how is it that the only One who was truly good and walked among us ends up on a cross? Jesus suffered for us, and promises that even in life, with all of our handicaps, He walks with us to save us, not punish us.

This Gospel could be summed up in a few brief words: “We are children of the Light of Christ.” Jesus raised up the blind man because **he was a child of God**. As Jesus puts clay on the man’s eyes, we are reminded of our first parents. God formed them out of clay and breathed new life into them. That’s what Jesus intended to do for this man-to breathe new life into him. And in dramatic fashion, he tells the man to go and wash in the Pool of Siloam.

Siloam was one of the major fountains that brought water to the city but it also had a sacred aspect as well. It was like the waters of Lourdes in France. It was said that when the angels entered the city, they came to this pool. And when the waters moved, the sick were healed.

When the man was fully healed, he and the people who saw him now able to see, could only explain what had happened as a miracle. It was a time to rejoice that the man’s burden is now lifted and he could see. To those who knew him, it must have been a cause for great joy- laughing, dancing and telling others. But the man in the Gospel wasn’t just healed, he encountered Jesus Christ! He no longer lived in darkness, but could now see the Light of Christ. He is more than just a person who can see, but who can also love and care about others. All thanks to Jesus.

 In these final days of Lent, Jesus is focused on His upcoming death. These are certainly dark and lonely days for Him. His disciples will deny, betray and abandon Him while His enemies will “high five” each other once He is dead. You think He doesn’t understand us as we find ourselves in these dark days of the coronavirus? He understands all too well. He promises to lead us safely into the arms of the Father.

 We don’t know how this virus will affect us nor do we know when it will pass, however we can and must turn to Jesus to help us through these dark times. Now is not the time to blame this person or that or this country or that, **it is a time to turn to Jesus in prayer and trust**. As we stay in our homes, perhaps tired of all the sad news or bored of being cooped up, why not pray a rosary for those who have this virus and those who are dying from it, as well as their families? Let us rejoice because our success will depend not on our ability to overcome, but through God’s grace and desire to heal. Yes, we pray for a healing, a cure, but it is God who enables us to discover what it takes to overcome this virus. We need two miracles now: one for an end to this crisis and the other that we will have within us the compassion, love and understanding toward those around us. Then the Light of Christ will shine through us and we can be a light to our families, friends and community.

Peace, Fr. Tom

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