

Fourth Sunday in Lent

When we listen to the longer version of today's gospel, we can appreciate more clearly the playing out of a wonderful drama. It is a drama that is made up of eight short scenes. As the drama unfolds, the man born blind moves from darkness into light and the Jewish authorities move from light into darkness. And all of this happens on the last day of the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles a feast that was celebrated with rituals of water and light that were used to reaffirm the worshipper's faith in the one true God.

The stage is set. When the disciples see the blind man they ask, "Who sinned, this man or his parents for him to be born blind." But Jesus moves beyond that kind of thinking. Neither sinned, but he was born blind so that the works of God might be displayed in him." The works of God are only able to be witnessed by those open to them. The healing is described as an anointing. That reminds us of what we saw in our first reading today. God's choice for David to be king was sealed when he was anointed by the Prophet Samuel. It is Jesus the anointed one, Jesus the Christ, who is being revealed to the blind man. His physical blindness is only taken away when he washes in the Pool of Siloam a name we are told that means "sent". There is a little code in there that will be revealed when Jesus is either accepted or rejected as the one whom God has sent.

The themes of blindness and seeing go all the way through our gospel drama. Some of the neighbours of the man born blind cannot see that this is the same man who used to sit begging. For the first of many times the man is asked to say how his eyes were open. The Pharisees twice ask him to repeat his story. They cannot accept that Jesus was sent by God because he didn't keep the Sabbath. The man born blind can only say that he is a prophet. When the Jewish authorities declare that Jesus is a sinner and say that they do not know where he comes from, the Man born blind is able to see that he must be from God. God doesn't listen to sinners.

This is too much for the authorities and they drive the man away. It is then that Jesus finds him and asks, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" With a beautiful openness he asks, "Sir, tell me who he is so that I may believe in him". His openness is rewarded. "You are looking at him, he is speaking to you." The man said, "Lord, I believe" and worshipped him.

What is God saying to us at this moment of crisis and uncertainty? How does this drama help us to understand our own faith journey? Perhaps God is reminding us of our own journey from darkness into light. Like the blind man we too have been anointed. The choice God made for us was first signed with the oil of Chrism at our

Baptism. That choice was confirmed for us when the bishop laid his hands on us and anointed us with the Oil of Confirmation. When we gather to celebrate the Eucharist, we are invited to renew our commitment to live the choice that God has made for us. But how do we renew that commitment if we are prevented from coming to Mass?

When we think of our own faith journey there may have been long periods when coming to Mass was not important. Perhaps for many of us our growth in faith has been very uneven. There may have been times when we have lost sight of the one that we were called to follow and wandered off the path that he had marked out for us.

How did we get started again? How did we get back on the track if we had wandered away from it? What can we do now to make sure that our faith grows? How can our faith be fed and watered in these times of crisis and uncertainty?

I think it always good to start from where we are. We have much to thank God for. We may want to thank God for the people who have given us the opportunity to come to faith. We may want to thank God for the people around us now who support us on our journey. We may want to thank God for the people who have challenged

us and forced us to rethink who God really is for us and what it means to believe in Him.

When we cannot gather for Mass, we need to find other ways of praying to God. We might pick up our old prayers books and discover anew those prayers that used to be important for us. We might also, with the help of our family, explore some of the many ways that are being offered to us through the internet for prayer and meditation. Pray as you go offers helps us to meditate on the daily Scripture Readings. Mass for you at home is available on the Cathnews website. It is also telecast at 6.00am on a Sunday morning. The Vatican news site very beautifully televises the daily Mass that Pope Francis offers from the chapel where he lives. At the end of the Mass we are led through some prayers and meditation before the Blessed Sacrament.

No one believes on their own. We are a community of faith that walks the road together drawn by the light and the love that our God has for us. May we take time today to pray for those on or off the path who are trying to walk with us wherever they are.