

4th Sunday in Lent (Cycle A) Homily
St. William, Champion | March 19, 2023
1 Sm 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a | Eph 5:8-14 | Jn 9:1-41
Deacon Robert Mintus

Just a couple of days ago I visited my eye doctor. And after about a half hour of sitting in a dark room and trying to read letters on a screen and trying to honestly answer whether lens 1 or 2 looked better soooooo many times, I got to pick out a shiny new pair of glasses, which will arrive in a couple of weeks. As I left, I saw a collection container left by the Lions club for glasses that were no longer needed that weren't the right prescription, ones that were still good that could be shared with other people.

I got my first pair of glasses back in high school over forty years ago. So I have known what it's like not to be able to see things. However, I'm really blessed, as with my glasses on, I can see perfectly – or at least normally.

Today's Gospel about the man born blind is familiar to most people. We all know the "gist" of the story. Jesus encounters a man begging on the side of the road. And Jesus makes a paste of the clay

soil on it, smears it on his eyes, and sends him to the Pool of Siloam to wash it off... and when the man does so, he can see.

But I think that we often fail to recognize that most of the Gospel is about the rest of the story. First off, the disciples are arguing among themselves about whether the man's blindness is due to his own sin, or the sin of his parents... They are more focused on the facts of the matter and assigning blame than helping the man. And then later in the story, the Pharisees make a big stink about things because Jesus healed the man ON A SUNDAY. The man's parents are afraid to testify to the truth because they are afraid about being thrown out of the temple, and when the formerly blind man is questioned about what happened, they challenge him to tell the truth – that's what "Give God the praise" means – and then do throw him out of the temple.

We do deal with calamity and heartbreak on a frequent basis, don't we? Whether it's the poor folks in East Palestine, or those in Syria and Turkey who experienced the recent earthquakes, or the friend who has a car accident, or the relative we know who is

diagnosed with cancer... bad things do happen to good people – and not every bad thing that happens is someone’s fault. But they are a result of sin – mankind’s rejection of God that threw us out of the Garden and severed that perfect relationship between God and man.

Yet we see that today there are social sins that we have to accept some responsibility for – like racism, discrimination, mistreatment and abandonment of the diseased and aged, unjust wages and poor working conditions... and I could go on and on.

In many cases, we want to distance ourselves from a truth that we don’t want to hear. Why is it that people are required to work on Sundays or holidays? Because **we voted for it**. How, might you ask? Every time we shopped on a Sunday or a holiday, we voted with our money. Why is it that that the stores are full of cheap foreign-made items? It’s because they have realized that is what people buy when they shop on price. As Richard Gere explained in *Pretty Woman* – stores do not respect people. But they do respect MONEY.

Why do people struggle in poverty? It's because our leaders whom we elected voted against programs that could help them. Why do people get abortions? I believe it's because we have social systems that have failed to provide a reasonable level of support and it becomes a hard choice for people. One of the things I find most amazing about our country regarding abortion is that we have two political parties – one that wants to outlaw abortion but is limited in support of programs to help support the children once they are born, and another that advocates fully for those programs, but supports abortion as a right...

Sounds crazy, right? But... how about when we champion just wages and complain about the prices we are paying? Or we buy stock in companies based on the rate of return, blissfully unaware and unconcerned about how they are using our money? Or we buy the flashy new phone, not knowing about the working conditions where it was assembled or how the minerals in the battery were mined?

That is the kind of blindness that Jesus talks about today, and some days, maybe we are more like the Pharisees than we think. We have those own unique blind spots in our lives. Sometimes we see things and choose to ignore them or choose not to think about the implications of our actions... but that does not make us any less responsible. We must honestly admit that we are a part of the problem and need to be part of the solution. As the prophets John, Paul, George and Ringo sang:

He's as blind as he can be,

Just sees what he wants to see,

Nowhere man, can you see me at all?

Lord Jesus, open our eyes; help us to see.