FATHER GARY PENNINGS

PASTOR'S CORNER

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

On this 4th Sunday of Lent, we hear the account of Jesus healing the man who was born blind. As usual in John's Gospel, there are levels of meaning and rich symbolism in the text. In the scriptures, physical blindness is almost always associated with spiritual blindness, the failure to see and pursue what is true, good, and holy.

Through the Pharisees refusal to believe in Jesus, John is making the point that sometimes those who claim to see clearly are, in fact, blind to God's truth. In more than one place in the New Testament, a blind person came to see Jesus' true identity before the religious leaders who had functioning eyes, but failed to see His divine character.

This Gospel passage dispels the myth that physical impairment is the result of sin or is a form of divine retribution for sin. As it pertains to the man born blind, Jesus says "Neither he nor his parents sinned…"

Jesus goes on to imply that when tragedy strikes, how a person responds to it can become an opportunity to witness to faith and that enduring hardships with dignity and grace can actually glorify God.

Jesus presents Himself as "the light of the world", implying that it is He who illuminates the darkness, who brings light to our paths, helps us to see rightly and heals us not only physically, but even more important, spiritually.

The Lord's command to go wash in the Pool of Siloam foreshadows the cleansing and healing properties of baptism. The blind man's boldness, once his sight is restored, is a model for all disciples of Jesus to follow, to boldly proclaim all that Jesus has done for them.

This Gospel passage is used every year to accompany the Second Scrutiny of those preparing to be baptized at Easter. As it serves as a backdrop for self-examination by those in O.C.I.A., it offers something useful for all of us to reflect on during this Lenten Season.

Sincerely yours in Christ Jesus, the Way, the Truth and the Life,

Fr. Gary