**4th Sunday of Lent, Cycle A**

March 21/22, 2020

1 Sam 16: 1b, 6-7, 10-13a; Eph 5: 8-14; John 9: 1-41

Today’s question is: With Jesus’ help, what might I want to change in my life? How can I begin to see more clearly?

A man was born blind, we are told in the Gospel this morning. If you read the long version of the Gospel passage, you would hear how this man was unexpectedly healed of his blindness by Jesus, and how he gradually regained his spiritual sight also. Gradually….. At first only knowing Jesus’ name, then with the passage of time, he recognized him as a prophet, and then with the passage of more time he saw Jesus as the Messiah and Lord. It is a wonderful story of going from blindness to sight, from darkness to light, from confusion to spiritual clarity.

I would like us to reflect on three other people who have undergone, or are undergoing the same journey from darkness to light, from blindness to sight.

The first is Helen Keller. She was born in the late 19th century. She was born both blind and deaf and because of that, she was angry, confuse, isolated, and rebellious. Uncontrollable in many ways. But Helen, with the help of a tutor, began to see clearly. No, she was never able to see with her physical eyes, but she began to see with her heart. She began to see the world, know the world in which she lived, its beauty and wonder. She began to see even though she never gained physical sight. Helen went from confusion, anger, rebellion and isolation to inner calm, peace, clarity, and relationship with others. The process for her was gradual. It took time.

The second person is Oskar Schindler. Perhaps many of you have heard of him. Oskar was a German entrepreneur during the Second World War. He was a businessman, and a shrewd operator. He loved money, drink, women, and fancy things. He was rich, and he was a Nazi party member. He bought Jews during the war to work in his armament factories as slave laborers. He was very much blind in so many ways, blinded by the evil of Nazism and all it represented. But something began to happen inside him as the war continued. From the darkness of Nazism and anti- Semitism, he began to recognize the dignity of humanity in a sea of inhumanity. He began to recognize the value of every human life in a society in which human life was cheapened and devalued. Oskar Schindler began to regain his sight through the eyes of faith. In the end, he began rescuing Jews from extermination by getting them into his factories and encouraging them to practice their Jewish faith. In the end, he felt great remorse for his life of selfishness and what he perceived to be his failure to rescue more Jewish men and women.

The third person is you. You too are to move from darkness into light; from blindness to sight. I am reminded of what Pope Francis once wrote:

*How many times have we felt the need to effect a change which would involve our entire person? How often do we say to ourselves: “I need to change, I can’t continue this way. My life on this path will not bear fruit. I will not be happy.” How often these thoughts come, and Jesus, who is near us, extends his hand and says, “Come, come to me. I’ll do the work; I’ll change your heart. I’ll change your life, I will make you happy.” All we have to do is open the door wide, and he will do the rest. He does everything, but we must open our heart wide so that he can heal us and make us go forward. I assure you that you will be much happier.*

For most of us, change comes slowly, especially if we are creatures of habit, which we all are. It takes time and effort to be transformed, to better ourselves. To go from being a couch potato to an ultra marathon runner will take at least 2 years of concentrated daily effort. To play the piano well takes years of practice. To lose 30 pounds and keep it off happens over time and a change of lifestyle. The same is true for us in the spiritual life.

Yet, change we must - Each of us, no exceptions! We all must become who God created us to be, and none of us has yet fully matured. We still are blind in some ways. However much time we have on earth is time God has given us to change, mature, and grow.

We must “take no part in the fruitless works of darkness” and “live as children of light” as St. Paul writes.

We must move from seeing and understanding things from a merely natural, human point of view, to seeing as God sees by “looking into the heart” as God told Samuel. From seeing with our eyes to seeing with our hearts.

We must be washed, anointed in the waters of baptism and recipients of the other sacraments of the Church so we may begin to see with the eyes of faith and no longer be blinded by our sins, like the man born blind in the Gospel account today.

All this, for most of us, takes a lot of time, a lifetime actually. What is important is our desire to change, and our fidelity to God. Desire and fidelity bring about the change. Desire to resist sin and Satan, and to cling to Jesus, will bring us out of darkness, blindness, and into the light of grace.

As Pope Francis said, open wide your hearts to Jesus. Jesus will work great things through you if you are truly open to him. Jesus worked great things in the lives of Helen Keller, Oskar Schindler, and the man born blind in the Gospel; he will work great things in your life also. Open your hearts. Know Jesus. He will heal you and you will experience peace and happiness.