

HOMILY for 4th SUNDAY of LENT – Year A

This Sunday's Gospel shares with us another story of Jesus' healing power. Reflecting on that, I'm reminded of this cute story that I'd like to share with you.

An annoyingly self-righteous man went to the doctor for a check-up. "I feel horrible," Matt moaned. "Please examine me & tell me what's wrong!"

"Let's begin with a few questions," said the doctor. "Do you drink much?"

"Alcohol?" said Matt. "I'm a teetotaler. Never touch a drop."

"How about smoking?" asked the doctor.

"Never," Matt gushed. "Tobacco is bad for your health, & I have strong principles against it."

"Well, do you eat & sleep much?" inquired the doctor.

"I try not to overeat, gluttony is a sin," answered Matt. "And I'm in bed by ten o'clock every night."

The doctor paused, looked at Matt seriously, & asked, "Do you have pains in your head?"

"Yes, as a matter of fact I do," replied Matt. "In fact, I have terrible pains in my head."

"Well, that's your trouble," said the doctor. "Your halo is on too tight!"

Anyway, as you might recall, Lent is time for us to re-examine our spiritual life & come home to God. The challenge for us humans is not being able to see what's inside of our body. We cannot tell where we're hurt & might need some healing. The sooner we figure it out the better we'll feel about our life. That's why we've seen quite a few people who have felt miserable & lost in this world. COVID & the recent level of hate & violence has exacerbated that painful situation & deeply affected our mental & spiritual health. It has made it more difficult for our family physicians & medical team to find out where we might be hurting. Even with the modern technology like X-Ray & MRI, they still could not identify all of our hurts. The only one who can pinpoint where we're hurt & sustain our mental & spiritual health is God. For God is able to read our hearts & knows everything about us. Today's First Reading explains that great quality of God as following, "...The Lord said to Samuel: 'Do not judge from his appearance or from his lofty stature, because I have rejected him. Not as human sees does God see, because human sees the appearance, but the Lord looks into the heart.'" That is one of the big differences between God & us humans. But, that ability of seeing one's heart has enabled God to make the right judgments & show much care & compassion to our human family. Our world would turn out differently if everyone can read one another's heart.

Today's Gospel shares with us another story about the importance of seeing one's heart. Apparently a blind beggar came to Jesus & asked Him to heal & let him see. His disciples & others thought that the beggar's sin or his parents' might have caused him to be born blind. Fortunately, Jesus could see the poor beggar's heart & responded, "Neither he nor his parents sinned; it is so that the works of God might be made visible through him... Go wash in the Pool of Siloam." The blind man went to the pool to wash & came back able to see. Jesus clearly could see the heart of the poor man who had suffered for years & healed him without any hesitation. He could feel the blind man's pain & wanted to relieve him from it immediately, even on the Sabbath. Meanwhile, the Pharisees tried to challenge Jesus' healing power & said, "This man [Jesus] is not from God, because he does not keep the Sabbath." So, the Pharisees could not

read the heart of Jesus or the blind beggar. All they could see was the rule of the Sabbath, namely, no one could do any physical labor or heal anyone on the Sabbath. They could not see the caring & compassionate heart of Jesus & recognize the power of God at work in their midst. They were not able to feel the pain & suffering in the heart of the blind beggar & do everything in their power to help the poor man. Instead, they interrogated him & viewed him as a collaborator of a serious crime. They also considered Jesus' compassionate act & miracle to be the major violation of the Jewish Laws. They completely overlooked the hearts of Jesus & the blind beggar & focused simply on the religious laws. Because of that mistake, they treated their neighbor badly & actually pushed God away from them.

That is one of the tragic consequences for anyone who cannot see the heart of one's neighbor. Unfortunately, most of us humans judge everything by their appearance instead of their interior. We are attracted to how things look instead of their true identity. We have formed biases & made bad decisions based only on the exterior of everything we see every day. That is why we've seen all kinds of social problems & injustices throughout our human history, especially in recent years. Hopefully, today's readings remind us to examine the hearts of everything carefully before we make any decision or do anything. We should judge & value everything based on their intrinsic self-worth & virtues instead of their look or appearance. That way we can avoid biases & help reduce social problems & injustices in our world.

My dear brothers & sisters, in order for us to see the hearts of everything, we need the light & desire to look for virtues & their intrinsic values. We have that light in Jesus Christ. All we need is the desire to search for & acquire those Christian virtues & intrinsic values in our daily life. Hopefully, we can make that important resolution for ourselves this Lent & encourage the world to commit itself to that goal for its long-term benefits. Let me end my homily here & leave with you these words of wisdom from St. Paul in today's Second Reading: "There was a time when you were in darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Well then, live as children of light. Light produces every kind of goodness & justice & truth. Be correct in your judgment of what pleases the Lord. Take no part in vain deeds done in darkness; rather, condemn them."