

Homily
4LentA
3.22.20
Saint Bernard Church
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Today's Gospel starts out with the question that all of us are asking ourselves these days.

Why is there suffering? Why was the man in the Gospel born blind? Was it because his parents were sinners?

Why is the whole world suffering with the corona virus? Is there a reason? Or is it just some random thing that happened?

The reasons for human suffering are often mysterious, especially when it is the innocent who suffer.

Are we suffering because we got too involved with an atheistic, Communist country like China? Are we suffering because we did not foresee the dangers of helping to build a global economy?

Is God using the corona virus to punish us, to discipline us? It does appear that evil is rampant in our world. In the Letter to the Hebrews, Saint Paul tells us that God the Father might discipline us for our benefit, in order that we might share his holiness.

Jesus explains that the man in our Gospel of today was born blind so that the works of God might be made visible through him.

We know that God the Father used the suffering of His own Son, Jesus, for the greatest possible good, to reveal His love and to have Jesus sacrifice Himself to make up for the sins of humanity.

So, we can expect that, with regard to the challenges in dealing with the corona virus, God is going to use it for our good, to benefit us, and to unite us in a special way with the redemptive suffering of Jesus.

How might this happen?

The example of the man born blind gives us guidance in how we can benefit from the challenges we are dealing with in our lives today.

Jesus heals the man born blind by making clay out of dirt and His saliva and rubbing it on the man's eyes. This recalls the passage in Genesis

which says that God formed Adam out of the clay of the ground. So what Jesus does by putting clay on the man's eyes tells us that He is making a new man, a new creation, out of the man born blind. When Jesus is finished with him, he will have a whole new way of seeing, and not just with his eyes.

This raises a question for each of us at this unique time in our lives and in the life of the whole world. Are we willing to change? Are we willing to let Jesus do something new with us? Or are we content with where we are right now in our relationship with Jesus?

The corona virus has forced all of us to make huge changes in how we live. A lot of the distractions in life have been removed. Granted, we have some new distractions, but for most of us, we have more time now to focus on our relationship with Jesus. Maybe it's no accident that this corona virus event has taken place in Lent.

It's obvious from the story of the man born blind that at first he knows nothing about Jesus.

Jesus initiates the interaction with the man born blind. The man is totally passive. He doesn't ask for anything. He just does what Jesus tells him to do.

There's a clue that the man born blind knows that something spiritual has happened when he says that "the man called Jesus made clay and anointed" his eyes. The use of the word "anointed" indicates he is aware that something sacred has taken place.

Then, when the man born blind is asked if he can say anything more about Jesus, he responds by saying "He is a prophet."

After the man born blind is thrown out of his meeting with the Pharisees, Jesus seeks him out and asks him, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" Jesus reveals that it is he, Jesus, who is the Son of Man, after which the man says, "I do believe, Lord," and worships Him.

Then Jesus makes this remarkable statement: "I came into this world so that those who do **not** see might see, and those who **do** see might become blind."

Jesus is saying that those who are blind are open to Jesus as the physician who can heal them, who can change their lives. Those who do see, who are content with who they are and with their vision, would be better off if they were aware of their spiritual blindness.

What we can take from today's Gospel is that, during this Lent, with the corona virus and all that is going on in our lives, we must take the time, as I have mentioned earlier, to closely examine our relationship with Jesus.

Are we willing to say, in our own words, Jesus, help me to see You, to see You in new ways, to see You more completely than I ever have before. Put your clay on my eyes so that I might become a new person, transformed by Your love and Your grace.

By seeing You in a new way, with the eyes of my heart, may I, like the man born blind, make a commitment of faith. May I say, with complete conviction, "I do believe, Lord."

"I believe that you are the Son of God, that you suffered and died for me, that You have offered me the great gift of sharing in the divine life You share with Your Father. I want this life, Jesus. I want you to be the center of my life. I want to worship You not only in my prayers and in my time in church but in the way I live."

"You said, Lord, that the man born blind suffered so that God might be visible through him. Lord, I don't know how this corona virus is going to affect me, how it is going to change my life. But I ask for your grace, that whatever happens to me might make God more visible in a world that desperately needs to know Him, His love, His power, His truth and His mercy."

Amen.