

For Sunday, March 26, 2017

The Good News

4th Sunday of Lent
<http://usccb.org/bible/readings/032617.cfm>

1 Samuel 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a

Ephesians 5:8-14

John 9:1-41 or 9:1, 6-9, 13-17, 34-38

It's a Miracle! Man Born Blind Can Now See!

Earlier today a man, blind from birth, encountered the man they call Jesus of Nazareth and apparently now he can see! It was Jesus who stopped and spoke to the man, rubbed clay on his eyes, and then instructed him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. Like magic, the blind man then could suddenly see! Of course, some of the authorities spoke out in dismay since this so-called healing took place on the Sabbath. Even his parents had very little to comment out of fear of repercussions. However, what's the bottom line? Man born blind now can see!



Fake news for sure! Like my mother always said, “If a story is too good to be true, it probably is.” There are just [so many fake news stories](#) nowadays it can be very difficult knowing truth from fiction. We need to be very careful.

I don't blame those Pharisees for being overly cautious. Someone spreading such news could have really upset things to the point of creating chaos. But of course, everyone is drawn to sensationalism.

(Yes, this is tongue-and-cheek.)

There is an overwhelming flood of news and information that can wash us away if we are not careful. Unfortunately, much of it is commentary disguised as factual news coverage. Then there is the phenomenon of fake news stories that so often mislead well-intentioned people. With all this inundating us, it is easy to become overly skeptical of anything we hear, or even simply deaf to all news, fake or real.

Of course, once you cut away all the junk you can find truth out there. In living out our faith, we are dependent on knowing truth. Yet too often we act like the facts of our faith story are up for debate. We begin to see the account of Jesus in the Gospels as just another series of tales like they were written for a grocery store aisle magazine.

The story of the healing of the blind man tells of an encounter with Jesus that leads to freedom and healing. Jesus was and is real and the fact that he can heal us should be undisputed. But too often we live our lives in desperation and despair, seemingly unaware that we can take our burdens to Jesus. We act like the Bible story is just a nice tale to be told at church and not one that exists to change our lives.

My fear is that too many Christians *hear* the stories of Jesus but they don't *listen* to them. When we hear something we take in sound and physically react. When we really listen we internalize what we hear and then form a real opinion that can motivate us for a response. Indeed, in our world we are lacking a good bit of response to the Gospel.

These Gospel readings of the three weeks in which we find ourselves, from the Samaritan woman at the well to the raising of Lazarus, are proclaimed every year at the liturgies that feature Scrutinies for those in RCIA. They are meant to truly form and change the person who listens to them. They tell of a Jesus who offers us new life in him. Our Savior offers living water, dispels the darkness, and conquers the power of death. These are not simply the climaxes to good stories. This is *real truth*.

The Son of God is alive and well and we are all called to testify to that truth with our lives. We must step out of the shadows and be bold in our testimony. We must proclaim to a world in dire need that Jesus is Lord. We must take seriously the call to evangelize all who can hear and to spread the good news to the ends of the earth.

After all, it isn't fake news. It isn't even simply factual news. It is the *good news*."

Tracy Earl Welliver, MTS

PRAYER

O Christ Jesus,
when all is darkness and we feel our weakness and helplessness,
give us the sense of Your presence, Your love, and Your strength.
Help us to have perfect trust in Your protecting love and strengthening power,
so that nothing may frighten or worry us, for, living close to You,
we shall see Your hand, Your purpose, Your will through all things.

—*Prayer for Trust, St. Ignatius of Loyola.*

NOTICES

NATIONAL CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES COLLECTION

Many dioceses will take up the annual Catholic Relief Services Collection on the weekend of March 26, 2017. Parish resources for this important Lenten offering are available on the USCCB website [here](#).

LENTEN RESOURCES FOR PARISHES AND INDIVIDUALS

The USCCB offers special resources for Lent on its [website](#). From there you can download Pope Francis' 2017 Lenten message and the US Bishops' pastoral letter on the sacrament of penance, "God's Gift of Forgiveness," as well as other great resources.

In addition to its other materials for Lent, the USCCB is offering an [online calendar](#) for the season of Lent with daily activities and meditations, and "[Lectio Divina for Lent](#)," designed for use by individuals or in group settings.

CRS RICE BOWL

Materials for Catholic Relief Services' popular Lenten program, CRS Rice Bowl, are now available on Art & Media Portal [here](#). In addition to bulletin and other printed materials, video and social media content is available from CRS in English [here](#) and in Spanish [here](#).

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