

Our Readings for this Laetare Sunday focus on sight and blindness. We hear in our Gospel reading this question: because a man was born blind ... who **sinned**? This question is at the very heart of today's Gospel! The prevailing belief was that any misfortune or disability ... **must** be the result of sin! They were **blind** to the simple fact of life that sometimes bad things **do** happen to good people! And while we all know this ... **intellectually** ... when things go wrong ... don't we still sometimes ask: Who is responsible? Who is to blame? We hear this every day in advertisements for some law firms. This **must** be someone's fault! **Someone** must be made to pay! Frequently, this ancient search for guilt is manifested when **fear** ... blinds us and prompts us to search for **groups** ... be they ethnic, racial or religious ... to blame our problems or society's problems on. The search for someone to blame is still all too common, and still all too commonly **combined** with bigotry and prejudice.

Last week ... we heard about ... the life giving waters of Meribah and the ... "Living Water" in the story of the woman at the well. We continue that theme ... of water ... as ... in our second case. ... Jesus sends the man born blind to ... wash in the sacred Pool of Siloam ... and so now ... we add the new themes of light and sight ... the healing of blindness.

The Pharisees ... in **their** blindness ... rather than rejoice with the man who regained his sight ... they hardened their hearts. They were so blinded with hate and narcissism ... that when the man is brought to the Pharisees to **confirm** the healing ... as Mosaic Law required ... their focus ... in **their** blindness ... is on **discrediting** Jesus.

In our first reading we even see a moment of blindness ... as God finds it necessary to remind Samuel: "... Not as man sees does God see, because man sees the appearance but the LORD looks into the heart." And St. Paul challenges

us: “Live ... as children of light ...”. This light ... this healing of **our** blindness is ... freely given by a generous and loving God; ... freely given ... yet not quite free! Paul goes on: “Take no part in the fruitless works of darkness.” ... The message is clear: If you want to **be** a Christian ... you are obliged to **behave** like one.

These readings have been selected by the church to help us ... to look within and see... not as man sees ... with the **blindness** of the world ... but as God sees ... and ... with God’s help ... to be cured of **our** blindness ... blindness to his will ... blindness to the needs of others’ ... blindness to everything ... except our own will ... our own **desires**. Today the Church invites each of us to look within ... and discover those areas of our own blindness ... to reflect on them and ask ... our merciful God to cure ... us.

And there is yet another price for this gift of God’s light. You might think all would be happiness for this man ... blind from birth ... with his newfound sight. ... It was not to be. His parents were intimidated and harassed by the authorities ... and after faithfully witnessing to Christ ... he was thrown out of the synagogue. ... This amounted to excommunication! Living as children of light will **never** ... make us popular. Today we ... pray ... that Jesus will grant sight ... to see within ... in the light of true repentance for sins ... and strengthen us with God’s grace ... to protect us from the power of the evil one. ... ..So I will leave you with this thought ... returning to that first question ... if we **cannot** see ... is blindness a sin? Of **course** not! ... Is blindness a sin ... if we **will** not see ... absolutely!

Today’s readings have also been selected by the church to help Emily and Barry ... our Elect ... to look within ... and ... to be cured of **their** blindness ... and see. ... We ... pray with our Elect ... that Jesus will **grant** them sight ... to see **within** ... in the light of true repentance for their sins ... and strengthen them with God’s grace ... to protect them from the power of the evil one. And we look forward to celebrating with them in three weeks ... when **they** are bathed in baptism ... and receive ... the “Light of Christ”. We now invite Emily and Barry and their sponsors to come forward and join Father in the sanctuary ... for their second scrutiny.

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