

## March 22, 2020 The Fourth Sunday of Lent

*Mass Intentions: Sinora Dorvil, Tany, Augustin Parador, Thomas Scaria, Semie Descopain, Josefina Rivera, Rosa Elvira Aquino, The Blanco Family, and in Thanksgiving for Frantz Dutes.*

In every Catholic mass before we receive communion, the priest lifts high the host, the Bread of Life, the Body of Christ, and breaks it. It is a reminder to him and all the faithful that we, the body of Christ, are broken, and the same way that Christ was broken on the cross, the people of God are broken, and all of creation holds a certain brokenness, a fragility that is precious to God.

Yes everyone is broken. Whether we talk about it or not. The good news is that today we have a beautiful gospel that reminds us of the preciousness of our brokenness, the holiness of our woundedness, for it is the passageway to transformation.

“Was it his sin or his parents’ sin?” This was the question from the disciples to Jesus as they see this blind man. It was a belief during this time, that any type of hardship, disease, brokenness, disability was a result of sin, either yours or your parents. So even though the disciples have been following Jesus for some time now they are still stuck in this death-delivering belief system.

But notice how clearly Jesus responds,

no parable

no metaphor

no analogy

no questions

just a straight and clear direct answer:

“This blindness is so the works of God might be made visible through him.” The blindness has a deeper meaning so God’s word can be made visible.

In today’s gospel this blind man’s disability is to give him a new ability. That is so God’s word will shine through him

In the same way the disciples are invited to believe that this man’s blindness is to work for God, we are invited to believe that our precious brokenness, that our pain and suffering also is to work for God so God might be made visible through our brokenness. That does not make pain or suffering go away but hopefully it’s not as heavy. We don’t have to cling to it. We can hold it with our hands wide open because it can have a deeper meaning. Can you believe this?

Can you believe that your suffering, your brokenness, is precious in the eyes of God and can have a deeper meaning than just the pain we experience?

Believe that your cancer, your divorce, your infidelity, your addiction, your suffering, your car accident, your bankruptcy, you been being laid off, your depression, your anxiety, that your brokenness and your suffering can serve a higher purpose!

Don't be stuck in the death-delivering belief system like these followers of Jesus, believing that your trials and tribulations are because of your imperfections, your sin or those of your parents and somehow the God of love is punishing you, seeking revenge for what you have done wrong.

People do believe this. This belief leads to death. It will kill your soul. It's not true! It has never been true and it will never be true. Why would Divine Perfection ever need to punish? We do a pretty good job of punishing ourselves and one another. God does not need to do that. Don't buy into the death-delivering belief system.

A higher purpose. A deeper meaning. It takes a while for our eyes of faith to see with a greater clarity what might be the deeper meaning of our suffering. The man born blind comes to faith at the end of the gospel, but before then he is rejected, misunderstood, denied by family and friends and kicked out of the temple. His entire Community is stuck in fear, refusing to believe in a deeper meaning of his life.

Fear! If we're honest, we've been there before, stuck in fear. Maybe that's why we want to move so quickly from our own experience of pain or the pain of a loved one. Move quickly away before it can clarify our vision and teach us something new and beautiful.

The man born blind stays with his experience. He does not deny. He's not distracted from it. He doesn't even try to understand it. He continues to proclaim what he has experienced. "I was once blind and now I can see."

For God's work to show through us, requires a willingness to be faithful to our experience whatever it might be.

Now of course, if we experience something that's positive, it's easy to be faithful to it. We like to talk about it. But if we experience some pain or discomfort or embarrassment or shame, we want to forget, deny, distract or self-medicate.

Only by staying with our uncomfortable experiences long enough for it to teach us and begin to transform us, can we see with greater clarity how it might be used for the kingdom. Its deeper meaning.

Because it is great love or great suffering that have the energy to transform us. We would prefer great love over great suffering.

The man born blind knew great suffering in his blindness and in his sight because of the rejection he experienced. But through being faithful to his experiences he comes to faith. As he proclaims before Jesus at the end of the gospel, "I do believe Lord. "

Believe! Believe that in the midst of this virus, this dis-ease, this pandemic, that God is doing something new in our lives and the lives of our nation and the lives of all those living in this world. Believe that **we are not** being punished for sins. Believe that this time of grief and uncertainty, suffering and anxiety and fear can be used for a deeper meaning, a higher purpose. That God's work is being made visible through us during this pandemic!

We do not have to be stuck in fear! We will be fearful at times! But we do not have to be stuck. Be courageous like the man born blind who is healed and comes to faith. He mimics the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, always inviting us to know in our hearts, (because our mind cannot take us there), that God is working through this, in us, and with us, doing something new! And so pray to have the eyes to see it!

Be honest about your experience, and the pain of this suffering. Lament, complain, cry out, voice your own fear and anxiety and frustrations and grief to God. Because so much has already been lost. Lives, financial resources, security, jobs, education, the list goes on....

This is our experience, the experience of the world, of our nation, and of the St. Andrew community.

Like the man born blind, be faithful to your experience.

But hold it lightly and with great gentleness and compassion, knowing that the same God who sustained Jesus Christ in the midst of His lamentations and complaint in the Garden of Gethsemane, will certainly hear and honor our cry and lament and suffer with us.

And so, like the man born blind, we wait with faith, to see more clearly how our suffering, precious to God, can show forth the work of God.