

FROM THE PAULPIT



The Gospel this Sunday, the 22nd of March, is the one about the man born blind who Jesus heals. And this Gospel starts off with an interesting question. Here the disciples ask Jesus, "... Who sinned, this man, or his parents that he was born blind?" It is not unusual for people to think that such things are a result of God's punishment. Sometimes, people don't understand, where is the value in suffering? Why do these bad things happen - is it because God is punishing me, or us?

Jesus of course has a profound answer. He responded by saying that neither this man nor his parents sinned. This man was born blind "so that the works of God might be made visible through him." In other words, God can use unfortunate circumstances to bring about a greater God. God can use unfortunate circumstances to reveal greater realities of God's love.

We of course are experiencing a very trying time in our nation. It is especially frustrating because as almost everything is shut down, our economy is tanking, there is almost nothing to do, nowhere to go and nothing worth watching on TV, not even March Madness! We just can't escape this. Because of this it is easy to fall into despair or panic. These are two things which we probably have all witnessed in the last couple of weeks. Truly this is a Lent like no other. This is our time in the desert, where everything, and almost every distraction is stripped from us. Therefore, let's use this time to improve our relationship with God. This is a golden opportunity that has been given to us to renew our spiritual lives. God uses difficulties to bring about a renewed and improved relationship with Him. This is one of those extraordinary times that can bear far more fruit in us than we can imagine, if we choose to let God in.

This is the hope that we Christians have. Not the kind of hope that the world offers, our hope is different. Hope, in the Christian sense, is a virtue, it is a gift from God. This gift of hope creates in us a desire for heaven and eternal life as our happiness. It's an act of trust in God's future. In the words of Archbishop Chaput, "Hope refocuses our gaze away from passing pleasure, money, power, fame, and possessions, and toward living with God forever. It shows us what makes us truly happy, and it helps us to want that deeper happiness instead of the many other things that society tells us will make us happy." The Catechism also states that "The virtue of hope responds to the aspiration to happiness which God has placed in the heart of every man... it keeps man from discouragement; it sustains him during times of abandonment. Buoyed up by hope, he is preserved from selfishness and led to the happiness that flows from charity." This is the kind of hope that we need now. This is the kind of hope that is going to get us through these trying times.

Speaking of trying times, seeing as how public Masses have been suspended, that also means we are not taking up a Sunday collection from the many people who would be normally sitting in the pews. As you can imagine, this is taking a big hit on our income. We still have employees to pay and utility and a church building to maintain. That is why I humbly ask to the best of your ability, to continue to make your weekly offertory donations, either by mailing them to the parish at:

44800 Warren Road; Canton, MI. 48187.

Or you can donate via our website –

www.sjncanton.org.

God Bless,

Fr. Paul Ballien