

**Bishop Barres' Homily for the 4th Sunday of Lent (A),
Laetare Sunday March 22, 2020**

In the first Book of Samuel chapter 16, the Lord tells Samuel as he discerns which of Jesse's sons will be King: "Do not judge from his appearance or from his lofty stature...Not as man sees does God see, because man sees the appearance but the Lord looks into the heart."

How often in life do we judge others by superficial appearances. How blind we can be to the gifts, graces and noble hearts of others.

The Lord goes beyond appearances. The Lord looks into the heart. The Lord looks into our hearts to heal them, to purify them, to lead them.

The Lord also gives us graces to see into the hearts of those around us, in a special way our spouses and our family members, so that we can be Good Samaritans to their deepest spiritual needs.

This passage reminds us to be open to the Lord probing and healing our hearts. It reminds us to follow the Lord's lead when he gives us insights into the hearts of others and how to serve them.

The youngest son David who is out tending the sheep is almost forgotten by the father. As soon as David appears, the Lord tells Samuel to anoint David and "from that day on, the spirit of the Lord rushed upon David."

In these days of the corona virus crisis as we try to keep our balance and our bearings, the Spirit of the Lord rushes upon each one of us giving us comfort, strength, courage, faith, hope and charity.

The Spirit of the Lord rushes upon us through every passage in the inspired Word of God and through the Sacrament of Baptism.

In his 2018 Apostolic Exhortation *Rejoice and Be Glad (Gaudete et Exsultate)*, Pope Francis writes: "Each saint is a mission, planned by the Father to reflect and embody, at a specific moment in history, a certain aspect of the Gospel

(19)...You too need to see the entirety of your life as a mission. Try to do so by listening to God in prayer and recognizing the signs that he gives you. Always ask the Spirit what Jesus expects from you at every moment of your life and in every decision you must make, so as to discern its place in the mission you have received. Allow the Spirit to forge in you the personal mystery that can reflect Jesus Christ in today's world.” (23)

In these days of isolation at home, it is a good time for us to review the seasons and arc of the Holy Spirit's active presence and guidance in our lives.

Each one of us has carried crosses, embraced powerful graces and felt the presence of God in the crossroads and destiny decisions of our lives, the career paths and vocations we have embraced.

Now every one of us has a COVID-19 chapter to our lives that is still unfolding. And at the heart of this new chapter for all of us united in communion through Christ and his Church is our universal call to holiness and mission.

This chapter is mysterious and yet it is connected to every situation in our lives and helps us understand the Holy Father's point -- that we need to see the entirety of our lives as a mission.

What dimension of our overall mission to serve Christ and the mission of the Church is being focused and strengthened during the corona virus experience?

How is the Lord seeing into our heart and purifying, strengthening and healing it?

I received an email from our auxiliary Bishop Richard Henning at 4:41pm yesterday afternoon that I would like to share with you.

Bishop Henning writes: “I am speaking with pastors and seeing an explosion of efforts to share, communicate and practice the faith. God does indeed work in strange ways and this terrible grievous moment appears to be shaking many of us out of complacency. There is an energy and urgency that lifts my spirit.”

May that rushing Holy Spirit lift our spirits so that we may see with supernatural vision the opportunities to share our Catholic faith in these challenging days.

Psalm 23 with its image of the Lord as a Good Shepherd also washes over us today giving us comfort and strength. The rhythm of this psalm echoes deeply in our Catholic biblical consciousness: “The Lord guides me in right paths for his name’s sake. Even though I walk in the dark valley I fear no evil; for you are at my side with your rod and your staff that gives me courage.”

In the Letter to the Ephesians, St. Paul writes: “Live as children of light, for light produces every kind of goodness and righteousness and truth.”

We walk in Christ’s light and power even in the darkest valleys of life.

In the ninth chapter of the Gospel of John, we hear the story of the man born blind.

Guided by our Lord through a process of openness and faith, the man is healed physically from blindness but his spiritual sight is also healed as he beholds the presence and the Light of Christ directly.

He returns from the Pool of Siloam with his eyes filled with Light.

In *Jesus of Nazareth*, Pope Benedict XVI writes: “Jesus is the one through whom and in whom the blind man is cleansed so that he can gain his sight. The whole chapter turns out to be an interpretation of Baptism, which enables us to see. Christ is the giver of light and he opens our eyes through the mediation of the sacrament.”

In his recent Podcast on this passage, Bishop Henning says that we know the saying “seeing is believing” but that John 9 reverses that phrase to “believing is seeing.”

Our belief and faith in Jesus helps us have true sight, a sight that is enlightened, illumined and led by the presence, power and Light of Jesus Christ.

Let's allow Jesus to remove the scales from our eyes and to heal the various dimensions of spiritual blindness that each of us struggles with.

Let's allow that Light to shine through the power of Christ's Cross streaming through our lives.

We ask Jesus of Nazareth in these days to touch our eyes so that we can see.