

## Homily by Varghese Mathew, March 20, 2020

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be pleasing in thy sight, O Lord, our rock and our redeemer...Amen.

Dear People of God: Greetings to all of you in the precious name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. As individuals, as a wider community, as part of this nation, and as part of this beautiful world we live in, we are all facing challenging times in the midst of coronavirus (COVID-19). For me personally; balancing the challenges of homeschooling two children, pastoral responsibilities, and personal responsibilities has indeed enabled me to see things in a different light. This light is leading me to self examination and a greater appreciation of the things that I have taken for granted. Now, I'm looking at time from the perspective of moments; each moments of grace even in the simplest things such as the song of the birds, the barking of my neighbor's dog, the sun that sometimes shines too bright through my window blinds, the sound of the crickets – In everything, moments of grace indeed I see! The great philosopher Socrates once said, "An unexamined life is not worth living." This Season of Lent has indeed become to us a time of self examination.

Let me share with you a story titled *Bumper Sticker Hypocrisy* I read on a Christian online magazine: A police officer pulled a driver aside and asked him for his driver's license and registration. "What's wrong officer, I did not go through any red lights and I certainly wasn't speeding" said the driver. "No you weren't" replied the officer, "but I saw you waving your fist and cursing at the lady driving on the left lane and further I observed you yelling angrily at another driver and pounding your steering wheel several times when the traffic came to a stop."

"Is that a crime officer" asked the man. The officer replied, "No, but when I saw the Jesus loves you and so do I bumper sticker on the car, I figured this car must have been stolen." Religious supremacy is bumper sticker hypocrisy. After all, what is genuine spirituality? Jesus was critical of the religious folks who put on a show of religiosity. Genuine spirituality as Christ taught us encompasses one's love for God and neighbor. This blind man that Jesus healed according to the gospel lesson (John 9: 1-41) was a neighbor who was in need of love and support. Some of

the Pharisees instead of being happy for this blind man who received sight from Jesus were quick to proclaim condemnation of this healing act by declaring that it was Sabbath day. I point out the phrase “some of the Pharisees” because we should not be stereotyping all the Pharisees. There were leaders among the Pharisees who were sincere followers of Jesus like Nicodemus. Also, today’s passage indicates that the Pharisees were divided on their views clearly pointing out that it was some Pharisees who were questioning Jesus. These religious folks portrayed in the gospel were clearly suffering from a spiritual illness. The blind man was surely in need of physical healing and he received sight from Jesus who opened his eyes. When Jesus opened the man’s eyes; he was willing to open his heart for Jesus and accept Jesus as his Lord and Savior.

However, the religious folks were suffering from a more severe and disturbing condition called spiritual blindness. Spiritual blindness is a condition in which even though you have physical sight (you could have a 20-20 vision), yet you fail to see the obvious right in front of you. The feeling of spiritual supremacy, that some of the religious folks had, prevented them from seeing and recognizing God’s grace available through Jesus Christ. The blind man not only received the gift of physical sight from Jesus, but he accepted the spiritual light that Jesus offered, by believing in Jesus. He accepted the grace of God while some of the religious folks rejected that grace. The gospel writer highlights Jesus’ own words that He is the light of the world (Verse 5).

Now, in the opening of this gospel passage, the disciples ask Jesus the question of whose sin it was that this man is blind. I feel that the disciples were quick to make assumptions about this man. Jesus answers them by pointing out that this man was born blind not because of his sin or his parents’ sin; he was born blind that God’s work might be revealed in him. When certain things happen, we wonder whose sin is it. Right now during these times, we might be tempted to pose that question. Let us instead see the coronavirus as a situation in which God’s glory would be revealed to us. The gospel writer in John prefers the word signs rather than miracle in the gospel. Let us see in each moment of adversity, the sign of God’s work. Let us continue the Season of Lent in a new spiritual light....Amen.