

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today the Church celebrates ***Laetare Sunday***. *Laetare* is the Latin word for rejoice! It emanates from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah 66:10-11: “Rejoice, Jerusalem, be glad for her, all you who love her! Rejoice, rejoice for her, all you who mourned her!” These words of consolation and hope remind us, even in this liturgical season of repentance and a more austere way of proceeding, that a new dawn awaits us in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Our liturgies today reflect the sense of urgency and rejoicing which marks this Fourth Sunday of Lent. I am grateful to the Pedrin family who join us to share their musical talent and energy; the three Morelli brothers who will serve at the Altar (Atticus, the youngest, joins us for the first time!) and the youth of our parish who will serve as lectors. Many thanks to Joe Martin for his presentation last Sunday at the 9:30 am Mass describing The SEARCH. I hope more of you are able to take advantage of this great spiritual treasure, and thanks to Joe as well as Karen Chang for leading this program here at St. Pius.

In John’s Gospel for this Sunday which marks the Second Scrutiny, there are echoes of the encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan Woman and Jesus and the man born blind. In the first instance, the Samaritan Woman articulates the desire to have faith and come to know the Messiah. “I know that Messiah is coming (who is called Christ). When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.’ Jesus told her, ‘I am he, the one who is speaking to you.’” Indeed, in this encounter, her faith has saved her. When Jesus encounters the blind man, his disciples are quibbling about who is to blame: the man or his parents. At that time, it was believed blindness or any significant physical impairment was retribution or disfavor from God.

Jesus reaffirms his mission of healing and reconciliation by telling his disciples that neither the man nor his parents are to be blamed for his blindness; rather, this blindness helps Jesus fulfill his ministry. Despite this miracle, those around the man who has been cured of his blindness rebuke him. Jesus becomes aware of this situation. “Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?’ He answered, ‘And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him.’ Jesus said to him, ‘You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he.’”

Imagine and place ourselves in the stance of the Samaritan Woman or the man born blind. Think of the instances in life when we were struggling and having a difficult time. Our faith may have been elusive and God seemingly absent from us. We may have been burdened and overwhelmed by circumstances both of our making and those outside of our control. In any event, we felt weighed down by the challenges of life. Against all the odds and seeming limitations, something within us felt drawn to reach out to God. We turned to Jesus and he delivered us. Somehow we recalled those words, “Come to me, all you who are heavily laden, and I will give you rest.” In that intersection of despair and hope, we came face to face with Jesus.

We have come to believe in him and he says to us, “You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he.” As I reflect on these words, I am reminded of many instances just in the last six months where miracles have taken place here at St. Pius. A woman estranged from the Church for over forty years comes to Mass every Sunday now; a mother who lost her child and experienced great suffering has come to St. Pius where she finds consolation and hope; dads reach out for support in these difficult times. On Saturday afternoons there is a steady line of those coming to Confession and our Adoration Chapel has visitors from morning to night, people of all ages and backgrounds. They all come here because they have had an encounter with Jesus Christ and we strive to reaffirm His presence by our care for one another and the seriousness with which we practice our Catholic faith.

In *The Word on Fire Bible: The Gospels*, Bishop Robert Barron, Auxiliary Bishop of Los Angeles, writes: “In the strange and strikingly beautiful account of the healing of the man born blind, we find an iconic representation of Christianity as a way of seeing.

The crowds are amazed, but the Pharisees - consternated and skeptical - accuse the man of being naïve and the one who healed him a sinner. With disarming simplicity, the visionary responds: ‘I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.’

This is precisely what all Christians say when they have encountered the light of Christ. It was St. Augustine who saw in the making of the mud paste a metaphor for the Incarnation: the divine power mixing with the earth, resulting in the formation of a healing balm. When this salve of God made flesh is rubbed onto our eyes blinded by sin, we come to see again.”

**Please take the opportunity this week to join us as a parish family for our Lenten Parish Mission, either in person or via livestream. The theme is “Ask, Seek, Knock: Do to others whatever you want them to do to you.” (Mt. 7: 7-12). The dates are Tuesday, March 16, 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm (English) and Thursday, March 18, 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm (Spanish). I am most grateful to our presenters: Vice-Principal Catie Costa; Derek Gaskin of the Archdiocese of San Francisco; Sister Marlyn Monge (Daughters of St. Paul) and Omar Bravo, parishioner and Stanford University graduate student.**