

HOMILY LENT SUNDAY 4 - A

“The Man Born Blind”

(1 Samuel 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a; Psalm 23; Eph 5:8-14; John 9:1-41)

A very curious girl was walking with her mother one very dark summer night when the stars shimmered in the sky. The girl stared skyward silently for what seemed to her mother to be a very long time. Finally, the mother asked her, “What did you see up there, Sarah? What were you thinking about?” For a moment or two, the youngster seemed to search for words to describe her thoughts and finally replied, “If the bottom side of heaven is so beautiful, what must the other side be like?”

Let your faith in Jesus be a light to others.

Edwin Tootosis, a Catholic traditional elder from Poundmaker’s First Nation community in Saskatchewan, made a comment to his pastor one day. He said, “You know, in this community there are a few people who go to Church, and a few people who are involved in their traditional spirituality. The rest are lost somewhere in-between.

The gospel today is good news for all those who are lost in-between. The titles given to Jesus in the gospel speak volumes: light of the world; prophet; Messiah; Son of Man and Lord. Jesus is the Light of the world that is blind and lost. As the Prophet, he is one who speaks the truth. As Messiah, he is the Christ, the anointed one who was sent on a two-fold mission to redeem and sanctify; to save and heal. As Son of Man, he is totally human and completely divine, and as Lord, he is the Kyrios, creator and ruler over all of creation and humanity.

Our task is to believe in him with our whole being, and to help others come to that same faith. Faith makes such a difference in our lives. It is like a pattern, a faith pattern. Faith leads to Hope, and Hope leads to Love. The opposite pattern is a pattern of doubt. Doubt leads to despair, and despair leads to death.

The New Interpreter’s Bible has an interesting commentary on today’s gospel. In this story of the healing of the man born blind, John lays out the heart of his eschatology, describing how the incarnation has decisively altered eschatological expectations. God’s judgment is no longer reserved for a future age, because the presence of Jesus in the world brings the world to the critical moment of decision. The offer of God’s love, available to the world in the presence of Jesus, God’s Son, is the eschatological moment. Good and evil are defined solely by people’s response to Jesus; the good are those who come to the light, the evil those who scorn the light.

The healing miracle of John 9:1-41 is not simply a story that shows the revelation of the works of God in Jesus’ gift of sight. Rather, the Fourth Evangelist uses this healing story to portray the eschatological truth of Jesus’ incarnation. Light and darkness are no longer merely concepts, but are embodied in the characters. In the blind man’s journey from physical blindness to spiritual sight, the reader is able to watch as someone comes to the

light and is given new life. In the Jewish authorities' journey from physical sight to spiritual blindness, the reader is able to watch as they close themselves to the light and place themselves under judgment. Through the drama of John 9, the reader is able to share in the eschatological reality of Jesus' presence.

We are invited to make that same journey of faith, from darkness to the light. We must be aware of our own blindness, our lack of knowledge of ourselves. We can grow in our obedience to the Word of God. Our faith needs to grow stronger, to move from simple belief, to trust and surrender. Like the blind man, our goal is to arrive at genuine heart-felt worship of Jesus as God, and then to witness to others, to share our experience of what Jesus has done for us.

There is a story about Mr. Theresa of Calcutta that fits this gospel. She visited a handicapped man in a dark house who had had no visitors for a long time. She cleaned the house; found a lamp and asked him if he would light it. He promised to do so if someone visited him so she sent two sisters to visit him on a regular basis. After a year he told them they didn't have to come anymore. He asked them to tell the sister that came a year earlier that the lamp she lit is still burning in his heart.

The Eucharist that we now celebrate is an act of faith in Jesus as light of the world; Messiah; prophet; son of Man and Lord. His love for us shown so clearly on the cross is made present for us now. As we hear his Word and receive his Body and Blood, we are empowered to be light to others as he is to us.

So let your faith in Jesus be a light to others.