

## HOMILY LENT SUNDAY 04 – (Homily 02)

### “The Journey Within”

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

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“You are who you are who you are – what are you afraid of?” Those are the words that Richard Rohr, noted Franciscan priest, writer and speaker, spoke as he started a retreat to the Oblates some years ago. That statement shocked at least one Oblate present into greater self awareness; self knowledge, and in the end, greater self love.

On this fourth Sunday of Lent, those words along with the healing of the blind man, invite us to pray for the courage to make an inner journey into greater self-awareness and to live as children of the light.

The readings today are all about sight, about seeing. In the first reading from 1 Samuel, we are told that God sees into the heart and does not judge by appearances.

In the Gospel, we hear the story of the healing of a man born blind. His physical healing takes second place to his faith in Jesus. He is not only healed physically, but also sees who Jesus is, comes to believe in Jesus and even worships him, in contrast to the Pharisees who see only the rules that are broken but refuse to believe. His is an amazing faith in Jesus as Son of God, the first time in the New Testament, something even the disciples struggled with right up to the Ascension, where some hesitated to worship Jesus.

Perhaps the greatest presence of blindness in our world today is spiritual blindness. We find it so hard to accept feedback, to acknowledge our own inner reality, whatever it is. We tend to project onto others judgments that we fail to see in ourselves. We are sometimes unable to accept compliments, not believing that we are worthy of those compliments. Or we blithely go on hurting others by our negative attitudes we don't even think are there, or acting out of painful emotions that we refuse to acknowledge.

The last part of the Great Commandment that Jesus gave us was to love ourselves. That might be the most difficult commandment to live out. Shakespeare was so right with his comment: “Would that we could see ourselves as others see us.”

Examples of spiritual blindness abound: selfishness; insensitivity; false pride; prejudice; materialism; superficiality. The greatest tragedy is not to be blind, but to have eyes and not see. Greater still is to have eyes and refuse to see like the Pharisees.

In terms of addictions awareness, there are two kinds of blindness. Some people are carrying within them very painful emotions such as anger and resentment, shock and shame, sadness and self-pity. That is part of their spiritual burden that they are carrying around like an invisible garbage bag. They tend to operate out of denial and blame, and thus cannot grow or really experience freedom in their lives.

Others are burdened with negative attitudes such as false pride, stubbornness, a tendency to control others, a need for power or just plain neediness. This is another part of the spiritual burden that many people are carrying in that invisible garbage bag. They too operate out of denial and blame, and are personally stuck.

At a training session in Morely, Alberta some years back for the *Returning to Spirit* program, one participant was finding it hard to identify her *Way of Being*. Our *Way of Being* is the usual way that we carry ourselves in daily life, the sum total of our habitual way of feeling, thinking and acting. When the facilitator suggested that her *Way of Being* might be *Drama Queen*, she exploded in indignation. Yet everyone else in the room knew that he had nailed it right on. The situation was almost humorous, and eventually she thought about it, processed this information and accepted it. At that moment, she broke through to greater self awareness and personal freedom.

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 go out and share our faith and love with others.

So as we physically journey towards Easter, let us pray for the courage to make that inner journey toward greater self awareness and live as children of light.