

1 Samuel 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13

Ephesians 5:8-14

John 9:1-41

A veteran served the military for 18 years and is now working as a fire-fighter in one of the largest fire departments in the county. His wife and two children have felt the impact of these years of service. When she said that she no longer loved him, he began to look at what he was doing to push his wife and family away. He has turned to God, he reads the scripture, he prays the rosary. He is struggling to understand how he has been impacted by so much violence and death. Difficult and trying moments can be opportunities. This veteran is hopeful that his marriage will be saved.

The sacred word that we encounter here in the Sunday celebration, is meant to help us see the *truth* more clearly and to live our lives more genuinely. That is, the sacred word urges us to become the full human beings God intended. As we struggle to understand Jesus and as we struggle to understand our own selves, we are bound to encounter the *truth*. We will be on the cusp of what is right and good, that is, the *truth*.

Jesus steps into the world of a man blind from birth. This man was just sitting along the road begging for enough to get by for another day. Declaring, "I am the light of the world," Jesus gives him something that he has never had, the ability to see. And then, he is adjusting to a world that was now suddenly in his face, he is confronted with a barrage of questions. How did this happen? Where is this man? What do you have to say about him? And so forth! It was the declaration of the Pharisees, "This man is not from God" and "We know this man is a sinner," that prompted the man born blind to speak more boldly in defense of Jesus, whom he did not know. With no real support from his parents, and having raised the anger of the Pharisees, he is tossed out of the synagogue and is now alone. Jesus comes to him and reveals the *truth*, that he is indeed the Son of Man. Overwhelmed, the man expresses his belief and he worships Jesus.

This is the conversion story that we are invited to ponder on this Sunday of Lent. Jesus steps into the life of a man, blind from birth. This symbolically tells us that there is an inherent blindness within our human condition. Jesus gives this man the gift of sight and then he is challenged in an absurd kind of way. He finds himself defending the truth, and then declaring that he believed his life has been touched by God. Seemingly, rejected by everyone including his family, Jesus returns and is present to the man. He recognizes that with Jesus standing before him he has entered into "*the way, the truth, and the life.*"

While pointing out the difference between religion and spirituality, some one once said, "Religion is for those afraid of going to hell. Spirituality is for those who have already been to hell." The practice of religion is important in our day to day lives, but spirituality is going more deeply into living the *truth*. In all three lessons today there is a movement, an awareness, and a progression. I would not say that there is an arrival, for that would indicate that the progression is over and complete. Our growing spiritually is to remain open to our life experiences, the good and the bad, those that encourage and those that challenge. When we might feel alone and helpless, we can expect the Lord Jesus to enter, sustain, and guide us. We also find in this gospel lesson what happens when we believe we have arrived, we become entrenched in our own beliefs. The genuine practice of religion is meant to help us touch the deeper meaning of life, to integrate life experiences with basic beliefs and come closer to the *truth*, to God and to one another. Jesus is that presence that brings us into a sense of unity with God and one another.

**This is a conversion story. We each have a conversion story. This Lenten Season is the time for us to visit that conversion story that is unique to your lived experience, to my lived experience. What are the events in the past that have been turning points for you, that have given you a challenge and opened the door to see what you might not otherwise have seen? What is the conversion that is underway even as we gather in prayer this morning? We are not here to simply practice *religion*, we are here as a people, vulnerable before the Lord, open and ready for *truth*! Perhaps it is not so much to be set free from our life experiences but to engage them that we might become genuine members of Christ.**

**We turn our attention to the altar and celebrate Eucharist. We come forward to receive Christ, this gift of life. My prayer for each of you is that you might be a little more in love with Jesus as you enter this new week! If so, then all else will fall into place!**