

Homily, Sunday March 22th, 2020

1 Samuel 16: 1-13; Psalm 23; Ephesians 5: 8-14; John 9: 1-41

The Rev. Jean Lenord Quatorze.

Fear Not

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

In a world of instability, uncertainty, unpredictability, fear, terror, and global confusion, the need for anchors is imperative. Many of us are confused. The Coronavirus has caused unprecedented consequences: suspension of meetings, schools, universities, businesses etc. Withdrawing at home while waiting for the virus to pass can be the occasion for a return to oneself. We are suspending from celebrating the Eucharist together (who knows until when); we can no longer assemble in churches and other places. However, we can, read the reading suggestions for this Sunday. We can also take the time to read and meditate. Because the word of God has been the sure foundation and source of hope and faith for everyone over the years. God's word is the source of vision, faith, confidence, peace, and salvation. In the midst of crisis, we are called to find solace and consolation in the living word of God which can open our natural and spiritual eyes to higher realities.

In today's Gospel, the story of the blind man contrasts those who can see with those who can't. The irony is those who think they can see are blind, while who are blind can see. This is good news for those willing to confess their ignorance. To put it this way: if you are willing to admit there are a lot of things about the Bible, the Christian faith, and life in general that you don't understand, this passage is for you.

What I hope you will gain out of the sermon this morning is a word of reassurance: that God doesn't expect you to know all the answers. God is the answer. When you trust God to lead and guide you, God will give you all you need to live a full and abundant life. The story begins: "as he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth", (John 9,1). The disciple asked a question common to Jesus' day: " Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind"? (John 9:2). We ask the same question today. It goes like this: why do bad things happen to innocent people? Why are thousands killed now by the coronavirus? Why are some babies born with birth defects? Why does cancer strike some? It's an age-old question, and there is no easy answer to it. Jesus told his disciples: " neither did this man sin, nor his parents; but, that the works of God might be revealed in him". (John 9:3). The difficult times in our lives sometimes provide us with special opportunities to bless other people and also to be blessed by those around us. When we bear our difficulties with faith, the people around us find themselves blessed by our faith, blessed by our courage, blessed by our grace under pressure. Our terrible times can be fertile ground from which blessing spring. Blessings that will enable us to overcome fear. Yes, this kind of fear that is so pervasive now. when we let God's blessings flow like the river's stream, we find strength to be calm and control fear.

I am convinced that God loves you, and I believe that men and women were not created to be afraid, and God bears so much love for us, that he sent Jesus Christ to die in our place to forgive our sins, but also to heal us from any disease. Of course, many people are already affected by this coronavirus, others are affected by the fear of it. But we have a promise in the word of God. The promise is for us all : "The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of

our God endures forever." (Isaiah 40:8). And I would like to tell you that this coronavirus will wither dry, it will fade, it will go away when the wind of the Eternal breath breathes on it. Do not be afraid. Jesus constantly said "fear not." Do not fear little flock, for your Father has seen fit to give you the kingdom. What is the kingdom of God? The kingdom of God is a kingdom of blessing, holiness, glory, provision, love and peace. In Psalm 91: 1-10, we read this: " you who live in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shadow of the Almighty, will say to the Lord, my refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust. For he will deliver you from the snare of the Fowler and from the deadly pestilence; he will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler. You will not fear the terror of the night, or the arrow that flies by day, or the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, or the destruction that wastes at noonday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. You will only look with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. Because you have made the Lord your refuge, the Most High your dwelling place, no evil shall befall you, no scourge come near your tent"

Whenever you are afraid, afraid of this virus, I encourage you to read and re-read this psalm. Sisters and Brothers in Christ, do not let fear steal your joy. Stay calm, follow the instruction of those in authority. Most importantly, be present for one another. We are called to be practice social distancing, but we need, and we must, remain socially and spiritually connected.

May God His grace upon us and bless us. May God always be with us in this painful moment of our life. May God drive away fear and bring us confidence, peace, joy, serenity, and love.

Amen.