4 Sunday in Lent 1 (Jn 9:1-41)

 **FAITH-SIGHT**

The season of Lent sets us thinking about faith and baptism. It prepares us for Easter when we celebrate our faith in the person of Jesus Christ and renew our baptismal vows. Our Lenten gospel readings are full of references to baptism, for example, John 9:1-41, on the Fourth Sunday in Lent.

The way the incident is described - the ceremony of anointing the eyes, the command to go and wash in the pool, the faithful response of the man, different from that of his parents and the officials, - it all means that the evangelist wants us to see the similarity between Jesus giving sight to the blind and the sacrament of baptism.

First, Jesus claims, “I am the light of the world”' So, the meaning of the miracle is made clear even before it is described. He is not a physical light, like a lighthouse, but he is a spiritual light.

The meaning of the cure is not so much that the blind man was given his eyesight, which he had lacked from birth. His eyesight was only a sign of a more valuable sight that he had lacked, and that Jesus, on his own initiative, gave him as a gift.

This was faith-sight, the ability to see through eyes of faith, to believe in people, in life, in God who saves us because he wants to, and then if we want him to.

If Jesus had given the gift of eyesight without the gift of faith-sight, the man's eyes would have been open only to all the things in life that people see and want. The man’s spiritual blindness would then have put him in a worse state than before when he was only physically blind.

But his faith-sight was also given to him, even without his asking for it. It filled him with trust in Jesus and with gratitude to God. His response to Jesus' remark, “You are looking at him (the Son of Man)”, is, “Lord, I believe”, and he worshipped Jesus.

The whole incident has been meditated on by the Christian community ever since, and we have always found in it the meaning of our baptism.

Jesus takes the initiative by calling us to be Christians and Catholics. The circumstances are always the same: as Jesus goes along, he sees someone who has been blind from birth, whether that someone is a new-born baby or already an adult person. We are all born spiritually blind, without faith, because faith is a gift from others, especially our parents, who first loved us and trusted and believed in us. Before all others, God loved us, and he believed in us first. Jesus Christ's faithful love breaks into our lives, like a brilliant light, in the sacrament of baptism.

So, the blind man who has been given sight is each of us, and what happened to him afterwards also happens to us. People question us about the source of our light, Jesus Christ. And we can expect to be cut off by those who prefer to live in the dark and refuse to approach the light. Jesus calls them “those with sight.” They are satisfied with their own dim lights and insights without faith. They have eyesight, but nothing more.

Jesus Christ brought us faith-sight, the ability to see the full meaning of life. Jesus is the light of the world by which we can make out true meanings and follow right directions.

We baptised Christians are expected to reflect the light of Christ and show to the people around us the meaning of our lives, which only faith and love can explain. Then they begin to wonder whether their lives also have good meaning and value.

Our faith-sight gives us a proper perspective and allows us to order our lives according to a true scale of values, the values that Jesus lived by and died for. But it is never enough to know about Jesus Christ or to talk about him to others. Each of us, like the man born blind, must come into living, personal contact with Jesus Christ.

That's the reason why we come to Mass each Sunday: so that we can hear his voice

speaking to us out of the Scriptures; and we can receive him personally in the sacrament of the Eucharist. That's why we're preparing for Easter, so that we can identify our lives, and all that they involve, with his life, and our dying with his death. To see our life and death in his, we need his gift of faith-sight.

So, let us pray earnestly for faith-sight, for oneself and for one another.