

Sunday, Fourth Week of Lent

1 Samuel 16: 1, 6-7, 10-13; John 9: 1-41



“As Jesus walked along, he saw a man who had been blind from birth.”

I can hardly imagine what it would be like to live in darkness, listening and groping to make meaning of the world. But more than seeing with human eyes, Jesus looked with compassion. He went into action to cure the man by smearing his eyes with moistened earth and sending him to wash. Not medical eye drops, but a caring touch and a simple command followed obediently, brought the blind man to the light of day. What an overwhelming moment for him to see for the first time!

Yet others saw the healing not in wonder, but in questions. “I am the man,” he said repeatedly and “this is how it happened.” With Sabbath regulations broken the Pharisees persisted with more questions and testimony: How? Who? Sinner? Prophet? Their logic failed in muddy division and they threw the man out. Jesus found him and completed the healing with his own question, “Do you believe?” Faith was the bridge for human sight to become divine vision and worship.

So how do I see as I walk along?

- Do I see “as man sees,” or as God?
- Do I see human suffering as sin, or as a silent begging for my help?
- Can the earth and human touch heal me?
- Are my eyes filled with light, faith and compassion, or righteousness?
- Do I see Jesus, the Way to live in the light of kindness, justice and truth?

Come! Together we can make a difference!

Pauline Bouton, OP
Mission San Jose Dominican



Monday, Fourth Week of Lent

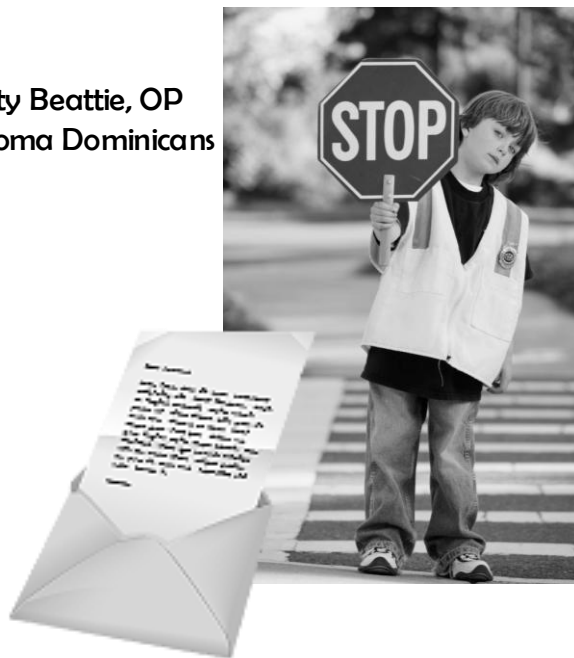
Isaiah 65:17-21; John 4:43-44

Today's readings call us to create a new heaven and new earth by being prophetic. Lent is a great time to examine this part of our faith and to act prophetically. I have always thought that prophets were special people, gifted with the ability to bring about change and to help others to live out the Beatitudes. I have discovered that all of us are called to be prophetic, to deal with the issues that the Spirit calls us to change in our world. We can be prophets both individually and communally, but it will not be easy, especially in "our own country."

Let me share two examples. As a group, we Tacoma Dominicans have taken a corporate stance against human trafficking. A group has worked on this issue by advertising on buses and distributing materials in many places, such as public restrooms. If you wish to find more information about the sex or slave trade, you can contact Intercommunity Peace and Justice Center at www.jpjc.org, or call 206-838-5700. This issue, human trafficking, may be one way the Spirit asks you to be prophetic.

Individuals also take prophetic stances. Recently I had dinner with a friend who had just moved to a care facility. She was exuberant about writing letters to people on Death Row. Despite physical limitations, she has ministered in this way for many years, but she was rejuvenated when she discovered she could do this letter writing for more than for the one she has reached by mail for years. She is a strong advocate against the death penalty, a prophet for compassion. Even when it is not easy, we need to examine our gifts, listen to the Spirit, and respond as prophet. Then we will bring hope through the gospel to today's world.

Patty Beattie, OP
Tacoma Dominicans



April 4

Tuesday, Fourth Week of Lent

Ezekiel 47:1-9; John 5:1-16

“No member of our human global community is whole until all members are cared for and well . . . we need to regain a sense of trust and hope if we are to thrive together.” (Donald Altman. *The Mindfulness Code*, 2010, p. 198.)

Jesus saw this man who had suffered for thirty-eight years from his illness with eyes of compassion and healed him. His enemies saw rules broken by healing on the Sabbath and a blasphemer who claimed to be the Son of God. Jesus was fully aware that his public life was a risky business and could lead to suffering. He chose to do it anyway.

I am writing this reflection soon after the tragedy in Tucson, Arizona on January 8, 2011. The young, disturbed man in Tucson saw “enemies” all around him and violently struck out, causing death and much suffering, including his own. What do we see in this situation if we can risk to understand and to respond to all the suffering with love? “St. Catherine of Siena, in a prayer written to encourage herself to more spiritual fervor, wrote, ‘Rouse yourself, open the eye of your understanding and look into the depth within the well of charity. For unless you see, you cannot love. The more you see, the more you love.’” (Brian Pierce, OP, *We Walk the Path Together*, 2005, p. 128.)

During this Lent, let us intentionally practice deep listening, presence, and acts of loving kindness toward all living beings. Perhaps then, more miracles of healing will be visible to us.

Pam Calvin, OPA
Tacoma Dominicans



April 5

Wednesday, Fourth Week of Lent

Isaiah 49:8-15, John 5:17-30



Isaiah tells us that God will not forget us. What is your deepest human need? What is it that more than anything else, you cannot live without? Is it food or water, shelter or usefulness, dignity or love? Food and water and shelter are basic biological needs, essential to survival, but we are more than that. Life is about more than simple survival. We are spirit as well as body. Love is our deepest human need. When we are loved, we come alive. Body and spirit alike are animated and energized. And love can mitigate the effects of the worst of circumstances. Love drives out fear. Love covers over a multitude of sins. Love makes the deepest pain bearable. Love makes a poor man rich and a weak man strong, a shy woman brave and a meek woman proud. Love transcends even death: love's memory keeps the one who is loved alive in heart and mind.

To be remembered and loved is life. To be forgotten and ignored is death. Does anyone remember me? Does anyone know my name? Does anyone even care that I exist?

Forgotten . . . like the people of Jerusalem, those few Jews who remained in Jerusalem after the city had been ravaged, after most of its population had been deported. They felt forgotten and discarded by God—with good reason. They had no life, nothing that would resemble a life: no society, no financial system, no government, no Temple, no hope, no future, just day-to-day doing their best to continue to be, refugees in their own hometown. They felt forgotten by God, just as many in our day may feel forgotten by God: Iraqi and Afghan civilians, Palestinians and Haitians caught in the crossfire of continual discord, deprived people, sick people, and bereaved communities. It appears God has forgotten us!

It is not that we have attributed our nature to an inhuman God, but that God has endowed us with a measure of his nature! We love, we can love all, and we should love all, because God first loved us. At the center of the universe, from the being of time until the end of time, is a God full of compassion, a God who comforts, a God who loves, a God who declares, "I will never forget you!"

I will never forget . . . you!

Love is our deepest human need, and I hope and pray that you will be loved, that you are loved and are remembered by people who care about you. But whether or not any person ever loves you, this is true, today and evermore: God will never forget you! Let us, in turn, remember those people who are on the farthest margins of society.

Barry Ryan, OPA
Tacoma Dominicans

April 6

Thursday, Fourth Week of Lent

Exodus 32: 7-14, John 5: 31-47

In John's Gospel Jesus addresses his apostles as a prophet. He accuses his listeners of being unbelievers. They neither fully accept him as sent by God, nor the wonderful deeds that he has done in their presence. Jesus admonishes his disciples for acting as stiff-necked as the Israelites of old who quarreled among themselves, jockeyed for position, and followed Moses only when it served their best interests. He reminds them that for a while they were content to bask in the burning and shining testimony of John. Yet now Jesus stands before them, offering a gift greater than John's inspired teaching. Jesus *is* the way to salvation and his testifier is not of human origin, but is God.



Jesus reminds us to look to John as a shining example of faith. John is a flame that ignites others and illumines the saving Light of God. Can we be as "wild" as John the Baptizer in steadfastly proclaiming the presence of God among us? Can we live our relationships in communion with the love of our Creator through the example of our brother, Jesus Christ?

Mary Kieffer, OP
San Rafael Dominicans

Friday, Fourth Week of Lent

Wisdom 2:1a, 12-22; John 7:1-2, 10, 25-30



“Let us beset the Just One.” How is it that even good people see others doing better, and react with envy or with jealousy? We do not have to be those described in the Wisdom reading. The beatitudes warn us about persecution, but why should this persecution come from our neighbors? We have not yet been molded into a grateful, affirming community of people. We ignore our call to community and love.

As I compose this reflection, I live in a country that has been deeply affected by storms. People are stranded and utilities have shut down in many areas. A newscaster just asked and encouraged listeners to check on the well-being of neighbors, especially the young and the frail elderly. I wondered why we are a nation that needs prompting to show care and compassion. How can we move from those who judged Jesus by his origins, just as we often judge others by religion or race? The reading from John shows us how such judging turns to violence; “They tried to seize him.”

Despite his dangerous situation, Jesus continues his mission in the confidence that his hour has not yet come. He tells those around him that they cannot know his real origins, nor the one who sent him. He is willing to show them this mystery, but they are unwilling. If I am called to compassion and tolerance today, how will I react? Will I allow Jesus to teach me?

Jean Matthew, OP
Mission San Jose Dominicans

April 8

Saturday, Fourth Week of Lent

Jeremiah 11:18-20; John 7:40-53

**I've made up my mind,
don't confuse me with the facts.**



This passage from John's Gospel, like several others, reads like an excerpt from a play. The plot centers on sharp arguments about who Jesus is – this person who speaks like no one they've ever heard before AND, of all things, is from Galilee! The characters on the stage line up in two camps: those for whom the integrity, authenticity and power of Jesus' person are credential enough for them to claim, "This must be the Prophet," and, on the other side, those who have dismissed Jesus, for "The prophet could never come from Galilee." The latter group reminds me of a bumper sticker: "I've made up my mind, don't confuse me with the facts." The Chief Priests and Pharisees, so sure that the Prophet could never come from such a "backwater" place, not only totally dismiss Jesus, but accuse all those who accept Jesus seriously as being "taken in" – naïve and gullible.

The drama heightens with the entrance of the only other named person: Nicodemus, also a Pharisee. Through the six times Nicodemus appears in this Gospel, we see a gradual transformation at work. Initially coming to Jesus only under the cover of night (Jn.1), Nicodemus' grows in an understanding of who Jesus really is – and with that, the courage to not only approach Jesus in the full light of day, but to "speak up" in advocacy for Jesus in the presence of the other Pharisees, his peers. Using the law as leverage, Nicodemus challenges the Pharisees on their own turf. While their attitude toward those unschooled in the law, the poor and uneducated, bordered on contempt, it was these very people who grasped the meaning and message of Jesus. The pre-conceived ideas, judgments and pride of position in the Pharisees created interior barriers that prevented the message of Jesus from entering their minds and hearts. On the other hand, Nicodemus, together with the "lost" and so-called gullible ones, had hearts open to Jesus, hearts undefended with no walls or barriers. This Lent may our actions and words "speak up," witness, to the meaning and message of Jesus. We pray that the Holy Spirit may gently cleanse us from whatever judgments and pre-conceived ideas that prevent us from recognizing Christ's presence in those around us and responding to the call of love.

Kathleen Reilly, OP
Tacoma Dominicans

April 9