

## HOMILY – 4<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF LENT, CYCLE A READINGS

This is a Lent we won't soon forget. The pandemic has profoundly changed our world. My only regret is that unlike 9/11 it feels like we are not able to spiritually respond in the same way. In 2001 I was in classes studying for my calling as a permanent deacon. My pastor was a devoted priest to his flock and held prayer services every night after that horrible Tuesday morning. Our church could hold 1200 parishioners and most nights it was standing room only. As a nation we prayed for answers, for comfort, for compassion for the victims, and just held each other out of the pain that was. Nearly 19 years later we are once again experiencing an event that makes us look into the face of our mortality. We ask those familiar questions of "why does God allow this evil" and "what will happen to me if I die?" But unlike 9/11 our bishop has realized the need to restrict our parish causing us to limit or even stop all gatherings to protect its flock. So what are we to do?

There are heroes amongst us and in times like this their stories can be very reassuring. Israel and King Saul's army faced the Philistine army led by Goliath the Giant. No one, including God's chosen King Saul answered the call out from Goliath to face him mono-a-mono. But a small, young lad named David stepped up and slew Goliath with a slingshot and no armor. He became a hero to the people, assuaging their fear of death and destruction from the Philistines. We too can experience the stories of heroes. Many of our saints faced terrors worse than what we are facing now, but they had tremendous faith in God and they became heroes to us. Take time now to read their stories since the internet is still open to us. Watch the news because despite the doomsday like reporting, there are stories of heart-warming heroism, like the son who is continuing to visit his elderly Dad at his nursing home. Visitors are not allowed inside but this hasn't stopped him. Every day he sits outside a window from his Dad, and uses a cell phone to converse.

At times like this we can feel like there is nothing we can do and that can lead to a sense of loneliness and hopelessness. In our Gospel reading we read the story of a man blind from birth. The disciples of Jesus ask "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or

his parents that he was born blind?” I always wondered about that. How could he have sinned before he was blind, if he was born blind? Anyway, the point is that rather than see this man as a child of God deserving of kindness, love and certainly empathy, everyone except Jesus turned away from him. Even his parents failed to protect him from the Jewish leaders who question them about his miracle story. But Jesus sees to his very soul and knows he has done nothing to deserve this blindness. Rather he knows that this man has accepted his fate and its purpose is now revealed, that God will be glorified in his healing for all to see. In the same way we have the power to perform miracles. That may sound bold or it may even sound blasphemous to some. But there are people that need our help right now. How much closer can I get to this Gospel story than to reference those amongst us that we forget how much more this pandemic is making their already tough life worse? Consider a blind person for example. How do they maintain safe separation from people if they can't see them? They rely tremendously on their sense of touch, which is risky considering this virus' stability on surfaces. We can push away our helplessness by offering to shop for them. And there are many other opportunities if we just try.

Finally in our Epistle reading Paul reassures us and the Ephesians that despite the seemingly growing darkness, that Christ is truly our light. If we follow Him, his light will reveal what we must do, how we can a light to others. Through your faith find your inner David and become a hero for someone. Share your story on social media so others can be inspired. You don't have to become a hermit in your own home. Get out virtually by getting on the internet and seeing what you can do. In the end please know that the Church and God is always there and we will do all we can to protect our flock. We are praying for you always. We ask that you too pray always for each other and for all. Be Christ in all you do and He will dispel the darkness and light your path.