

From the PA's Desk

### **Bishop Cistone's Mother's Day Visit:**

As many of you know, when I was in my 20's I spent eight years in the seminary (Sacred Heart in Detroit and St. John's in Plymouth), during which I received a Master of Divinity degree, which is the degree one needs to be ordained to the priesthood. I got distracted from my real vocation for many reasons, but God has a way of bringing us to the point of realizing who we are at our deepest levels, often through many years of discernment and searching. I have worked in full-time parish ministry for the past 30 years, and I could never imagine myself doing anything but parish ministry. There is rarely a day that I'm not grateful for the life God has called me to.

A few years ago I entered into dialogue with some of the leadership in the Diocese of Saginaw, and in the past year I have had a series of private discussions with Bishop Cistone about ordination. On Mother's Day in May, he will join us here at the Sunday Mass to formally call me to Candidacy for Holy Orders, and his intention is to ordain me a deacon, with the eight married men who will be permanent deacons, on June 11<sup>th</sup>. After I begin serving as a deacon, he and I will continue our discussion about possible priesthood ordination in the future. I am grateful to the Lord, the Bishop, and a number of dedicated priests in the Diocese of Saginaw, who are with me on this journey, as I continue to discern God's will for my life. I'm also grateful to you as a parish for helping me confirm what my vocation really is. As they say, "better late than never!" Blessings to all of you, and I hope you can celebrate Mother's Day with me at Mass.

### **Gospel Today:**

Today's Gospel fits in with a long line of biblical passages referring to those who are blind. What's important to remember is that all of scripture is intended for those who are hearing it in their own time and space. So when we listen or read scripture, we are not reading something from the archives of history, but something intended for us in the now and present moment. Our God is not a God of the past but the present and the future. When Moses asked who God was, God responded with I AM, or I AM WHO AM. God's own name suggests the present moment. God did not answer Moses by saying "I WAS," or "I WILL BE." God simply said "I AM," and that name is intended to draw us into the mystery that God lives in THIS moment with us.

So with the story of the blind person in today's Gospel, the important question to ask is where are we in the story? Every time I hear biblical passages about the blind, I am reminded that it's referring to me, because often I do not SEE the way God sees. Throughout the course of this reading, notice that Jesus makes special efforts to help people to "see," whether it be the man born blind, or his disciples who are often clueless to the ways of Jesus, or the Pharisees who focus on external realities but fail to see into the depths of the soul.

A philosopher once said: “We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark; the real tragedy of life is when adults are afraid of the light.” Sometimes we have so ordered and arranged our lives that we consider anything that disrupts or challenges that order as evil. We cower from change, and we create walls around ourselves to keep out people and ideas we don’t know or understand. Jesus’ restoring the sight of the blind man (read “us” as those blind), challenges the Pharisees (read “us” as those blinded), to open their own eyes to the reality of God’s goodness in their midst. The Lenten journey calls us to detach ourselves from anything that causes us to close our eyes, minds, and hearts to the light of Jesus in the Gospels. With the eyes of faith, we are able to see beyond appearances and superficialities, and look deeper to discover how God is empowering us to re-create the world. We can become so absorbed with our own narrow interests that we miss the obvious good that is present before us everywhere. Today’s Gospel illustrates the destructiveness of such myopia. This season of Lent calls us to open our eyes to the grace and love of God present to us in everything that is good.

### **Alpha Next Week:** How Can I Have Faith?

#### **Talk summary:**

- The episode address the questions, ‘What is a Christian?’ and ‘How do I know if I’m a Christian?’
- When a person becomes a Christian, they begin a new life – Christianity is about a relationship with Jesus and when you are in a relationship with someone – you know it.
- You can know that you are a Christian.
- Faith is trust – everybody exercises faith. But faith in Jesus is not a blind leap, but a step based on evidence.
- Christian faith is based on three things:
  - God’s promise – the word of God
  - The work of Jesus
  - The witness of the Holy Spirit
- The episode finishes with an encouragement to take that step of faith (it’s a free gift but it cost Jesus his life for us), based on the evidence, and an opportunity to pray, inviting Jesus into our hearts: ‘I will come in and eat with that person and they with me.’ (Revelation 3:20)

### **Big Raffle Tickets:**

Big Raffle tickets are available at the back of church. The Big Raffle is conducted by The Catholic Community Foundation of Mid-Michigan, and they promote many evangelization and educational programs around the Diocese of Saginaw. You can win many prizes, and please check out the banner in the back of church. Tickets are only \$5.00, and best of all, half the money we sell comes back to the parish. I’ve also asked the Catholic Community Foundation for a grant to help us pay for the Alpha meals, so please be generous!