

# OUR LADY STAR OF THE SEA

## Mumbles

### Reflection for

Fourth Sunday of Lent (Laetare Sunday) Year A, 22 March 2019

(May be used for Home Prayer Service)

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*This reflection may be used during the home prayer service. Please see the home prayer service sheet for details.*

#### LAETARE SUNDAY

On *Laetare* Sunday (as similarly with the Third Sunday of Advent called *Gaudete* Sunday) the Church expresses hope and joy amid our Lenten fasts and penances. *Laetare* is the first word — meaning “rejoice” — in the Latin text of today’s entrance antiphon taken from Isaiah 66:10-11: “Rejoice, Jerusalem, and all who love her. Be joyful, all who were in mourning; exalt and be satisfied at her consoling breast.”

#### THE GOSPEL

The healing of the man born blind is the sixth of seven miracles (“signs”) in the Gospel of John. The first sign is the turning of water into wine (John 2:1-11); and the seventh is the raising of Lazarus (John 11:1-44). Each sign is revelatory of some aspect of Jesus’ mission to reveal the Father to humanity. The healing of the man born blind reveals Jesus as the light of the world. The Gospel narrative represents a dialogue, an encounter, between Christ and humanity; and the message is about how Christ, the light of the world, is sent to remove humanity’s blindness and to reveal God’s love to humanity. This message comes alive when we consider some key significations in the narrative.

**The Blind Man:** The blind man signifies humanity. This is humanity blinded by sin and unable to find the way to the Father. As the Apostle Paul says, “all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

**Christ meets the Blind Man:** As Jesus went along, he saw the blind man. Here, Christ enters the path of humanity and he journeys with humanity. He did this by assuming our human nature (in the mystery of the incarnation which we celebrate at Christmas) as John 1:14 says, “The Word took flesh and dwelt among us”. He does not abandon us; he comes to our aid. According to Bede the Venerable, this passage or journey signifies Christ’s descent from heaven to earth where he saw the blind man (humanity) and looked with compassion on the human race.

**Christ spits on the ground and makes a clay:** Christ spat on the ground, made a clay of the spittle, and anointed the eyes of the blind man. This action of Christ is profoundly significant for the life of the

Church. In the Genesis account, fallen humanity is represented in the story of Adam who was made from clay of the ground (Genesis 2:7). Through sin, humanity became blind to divine light. Now, Christ, uses clay to restore sight to humanity. This way, he reverses the original fall and brings humanity light and hope. We are now a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Christ’s action is also sacramental. Instituted by Christ, sacraments are outward signs of inward grace. In the sacraments, the gifts of nature and works of our hands (e.g. bread, wine) are transformed into divine realities. Christ’s spittle sanctifies the earth and becomes an outward sign (anointing with clay) of inward grace (spiritual healing). The man was sent to the pool of Siloam to wash. The pool signifies the baptismal font. As St Augustine of Hippo says, in being sent to the pool to wash, the blind man was baptised in Christ and was enlightened. Christ brings healing and light to humanity through the sacraments. The healing and sanctifying action of Christ is carried on by the Church through the sacramental ministry.

#### THEREFORE, REJOICE AND REACH OUT

We **rejoice** because we have faith in a Saviour who meets us where we are at in life, even when we are spiritually blind to his presence. We may feel lost and even abandoned, but a divine promise lies within us. He will find us and bring us light. Through the ministry of the Word and the Sacraments, he is present to us. In a very challenging time as this, our faith in Christ is strength by which a shattered world shall emerge into the light.

We are moved by Our Lord’s example: he showed compassion to the blind man. Others neglected the blind man, or even wondered if his blindness was due to his own sins or his parents’ sins. Our Lord did not pass by, he did not judge; instead, he brought sight, light and revealed divinity to the man. Like Our Lord, we are to show compassion (call it humanity) to others. In the present circumstance, this could be to pick the phone and reach out, to check on others, especially the vulnerable, the elderly and those who live alone. **If we are to reveal divinity to others, we must show them humanity (compassion).**