



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

#### **4th Sunday of Lent - Year A**

##### ***Blind Man Sees – Hallelujah!***

Readings: *1 Samuel 16:1, 6-7, 10-13, Ps 22, Ephesians 5: 8-14, John 9: 1-41*

You might have thought that this would be the response of the religious crew that haunted the Temple in the wake of Jesus' healing of the sightless man. But sadly not. Not only are they ungrateful but demand a full enquiry into who had the temerity to do this on the wrong day. Ingratitude is an ugly and defacing characteristic of Man at his worst.

Ingratitude....

Shakespeare has the raging Lear in the great tragedy, rail against his daughter Goneril, 'How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child'. His misjudgement of his relations, his assumption of goodwill, his game-playing with the nature of familial love has ended in disaster. It will climax in the storm of civil war of madness and of death. Shakespeare had a profound understanding of the corrosive effects of ingratitude.

Nothing eats at the fabric of our wellbeing and our peace more potently than the constant acid drip of 'thanklessness'. We have gradually morphed from a society of Godward gratitude to one of

expectations and rights. To one of choreographed hostility to others with whom we disagree and synthetic rage towards anything that stands in the way of vested interest and the power of the organised lobby group. We have become a society of lawyers the worst of which finds legal power in the increasingly 'woke' craziness of our Parliament, our institutions, our education systems and even, see the recent madness of the C of E and the German Synodal Way, our churches.

The culture of faith, hope and charity has been trumped by the culture of grudge and blame and accusation. The Christian way of self-examination and confession has been swept aside by the finger pointing of the angry mob.

The moral authority of 'right and wrong' has been eviscerated by the cancerous growth of relativism, as Pope Benedict softly warned. 'Thanklessness' does not just leave an unpleasant taste in the mouth but it has huge personal, familial, societal and civilizational consequences for us all.

It is no accident that the central part of the Mass is the Eucharistic Prayer – the prayer of THANKSGIVING. It is the prayer where, in simple formulaic terms, we reprise the glorious generosity of God in Salvation history towards His errant and beloved creature, Man. When you remove the penitential rite from the heart of man, guilty of nothing, everything is somebody else's fault, you damage his responsibility for his fellow man and his hope of reconciliation with God. When you remove the response of thanksgiving from the heart of Man you condemn him to an impoverishment of the soul and a fatal barrier to glory.

So the reaction of the usual suspects in today's Gospel is a measure of the sin sickness of the institution which they represent. Grateful for nothing, furious at the loving demonstration of goodness. Better to leave the man blind than that he be healed by Jesus.

This kind of institutional fury and ingratitude is increasingly personified by the current state under its abject parliamentary leadership.

Banning prayer outside clinics lest one child be saved. Criminalising any church help for those wrestling with disordered inclination. Giving free rein to the politics of perversion to be peddled in our educational institutions.

These are the not incidental results of a wholesale and unauthorised rejection of the appreciation of our Judeo- Christian culture and our national neglect of the Faith. These are all consequential on our national apostasy.

In today's Gospel the blind man is doubted, accused, cross-examined, abused, rejected. The evidence of his family trashed, the witnesses side-lined. They are not interested in truth – only retaining power. Indeed, it is the final irony of the story that, while the blind man sees, the powerbrokers, the rejecters of Christ are blind. Their ingratitude blinds them to reality and shrinks the heart dry of all natural compassion and human concern.

Thanklessness dehumanises us. It is why we used to go on and on teaching our children to say Please and Thank You and Sorry. These were not, as it turned out, trivial practices of polite society but rather the foundational spiritual and moral education of the heart and soul.

Thanklessness is the venom in the snakebite of Satan. It gnaws at the bonds of affection. It undermines love. It diminishes relationships. It wastes the harvest of virtue and leaves us starving in the midst of plenty.

THANKFULNESS is the way home, the great encourager, the touchstone of reality, the warmer of the heart, the bond of love, the secret at the core of the universe, the simple mystery at the heart of the Mass.

A simple exercise: At the end of each day recall three things for which you want to thank God and do it then and there. Remember those you might have thanked and thereby encouraged in goodness and virtue but didn't - and go back and do it.