

Surely We Are Not Blind

The gospel story of the man born blind has it all. It's filled with plot twists and turns. It only takes two verses for Jesus to heal the man born blind, but the controversy surrounding the healing unfolds over the next thirty-nine verses. The story presents us with an intriguing cast: the blind man, the Pharisees, religious leaders, the man's neighbors, a crowd of onlookers, Jesus and the disciples. There is the irony of who can and cannot truly see. The Pharisees with 20/20 vision are blind to the work of God in Jesus. In the midst of all this blindness, a man who is born blind is healed! He sees in Jesus a prophet, a man from God and his Lord. Each time he speaks, his faith deepens.

Today's gospel raises the questions of sin and responsibility. In the Old Testament, blindness is listed among the curses that God uses to punish the wicked. The Pharisees have a biblical basis for the question they ask, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" But Jesus doesn't see illness in terms of blame and shame, guilt and sin. Jesus uses this as an opportunity to reveal the mighty works of God. Misery is not proof of God's abandonment, and suffering is not evidence of God's guilty verdict. Instead, this is where God is at work, the darkness where God's light shines.

More details make this a fascinating story. There is the place of ritual and biblical laws. Jesus heals on the Sabbath, though the religious authorities prohibit it. What does it mean that Jesus shatters honorable and old ways we are certain are set in stone? And the earthly healing itself, which leaves the blind man remade, created new, and not the person he once was? Yet to cling to hard, old rules when our Lord is at work makes us blind to the way Jesus always works toward new life and new creation, making all things new.

John's gospel wants us inside the story, wants us to open our eyes so we too can see and believe that Jesus is the Christ. He tells us the stories he does so that we too can believe that Jesus is the son of God and that we will find life in His name. If we simply stand back and only observe, then our eyes are closed to the clear vision the gospel offers us.

It is in this story along with this Eucharist where we can begin to see the most clearly. When we come to worship, we each bring our own blindness: our need to hide, our readiness to deceive, fears and hatreds too deep to manage, resentments that eat at us, abuse that makes us cry, doubt that leads us to wonder if God actually cares about us. We come with all of this and more. This darkness blinds us to the work of God in the world and in our lives.

Today, Jesus won't spit on the ground and rub mud in our eyes so that we can see. But this word and this sacrament are for our healing so that can say in faith, "One thing I do know is that I was blind and now I see." We may not know how or even whether we will be healed today. But we belong inside of this story. It is our story, we who were once darkness, but now are the light of the Lord.



Stewardship Report:



Revenue

February 25th:	8,848.28
Faith Direct:	1,039.00
Total Offertory:	9,887.28
Last Year:	7,694.61
Poor Box:	185.90
Every Penny Counts Box:	51.11

Number of Adult Envelopes: 289; Number of Children's Envelopes: 10; Number of Faith Direct donors: 31; Number of Registered Households: 656

Building and Maintenance Fund: Our **second** collection **this** weekend is for our regular **Building Fund**. This monthly collection enables us to make continuing repairs, upkeep and improvements to our parish and school buildings as well as our parish grounds. May we suggest a minimum of \$10 per household. As always, we thank you for your continuing generosity!

2008 Archbishop's Appeal: Thank you to all those who participated in our In Pew campaign for this year's appeal. As always, we deeply appreciate the generosity of your support for this campaign. For those who have not had the opportunity to make a pledge or gift, please join those who have in our community support of the Archdiocesan programs. If you need information on the appeal, there are informational pamphlets and pledge envelopes in the pamphlet rack in the entry of the church. This is another way for us to share our alms with the poor during the Lenten season.

Faith Direct: Have you signed up for Faith Direct? This program is an easy way to give your contributions to the church each month through an automatic debit to a bank account or credit card. By using Faith Direct, you provide the Church with a steady and dependable source of income which is used to operate the various programs here at the Church. If you did not receive a form and would like to sign up for this service, please call the rectory office.

FORWARD IN FAITH: the Archdiocesan capital campaign has been collecting pledges for over two years. Our church receives a percentage of the funds collected to use in our parish. We received our return for October/November/December 2006 in the amount of **\$11,588.00!**

Seventh Grade Shoe Collection Drive: We have started a Lenten project that involves collecting "used but not abused" adult athletic shoes, sizes 7 and larger. The shoes will be shipped to Ghana, get refurbished there, and then be sold to street vendors. The money profited will be used to train farmers in techniques that yield more food and help protect the earth. Our goal is to collect 600 pairs of shoes with your help. Kofi, the farmer, greatly appreciates your generosity and support. "Give us the shoes you don't wear on your feet so other may eat." Shoe drop-off is in the front school office, or you may put the shoes in the large box in the church vestibule. The collection lasts throughout Lent. Thank you for your support of our class project to make a difference to others during this Lenten season!

St. Matthias School Openings for 2008/2009



There are a limited number of openings for the 2008-2009 school year in Pre-kindergarten and 4th grade. Please contact Vivian Mason in the school office at 301-306-4582 for further information.

St. Matthias School Raffle 2008

The 7th Raffle Drawing was Monday, February 25th

Michelle Carter of Bowie, MD **won \$300**

The seller, **William Howell** from Bowie, MD **won \$50**

Our 2008 Lenten Schedule of Worship & Activities

Catholics and Bible Basics

Tuesday evenings of Lent from 7:00 to 8:15 PM in the School Library. In case of inclement weather, check Father Jeff's voice mail at the rectory one hour prior to the start of class.

Lenten Regulations for Catholics

In preparation for the paschal mysteries of Easter, Catholics are reminded of the following regulations for the forty days of Lent: **All Catholics over fourteen years of age must abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday (February 6th) and all Fridays of Lent, including Good Friday (March 21st). On both Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, Catholics between the ages of eighteen and fifty-nine should fast.**

Daily Rosary

Recited at 8:00am Monday through Friday

Lenten Weekday Mass

Monday through Friday at 8:30am

Stations of the Cross

Each Friday of Lent at 7:30pm

Confessions

Every Wednesday of Lent starting February 13th

From 7:00pm to 8:00pm

Every Saturday from 3:30pm to 4:30pm

Good Friday (March 21st) from 10:00am to 11:00am

Or by appointment with a parish priest

Lenten Spiritual Literature

There are several titles available in the pamphlet rack in the church to assist you in your Lenten Journey.

Faith Formation:

Confirmation Parent/Candidate: meeting will be held on Monday, March 3rd at 6:45 p.m. in Friendship Hall. At least one parent must accompany their child. These meetings are mandatory and missing them may affect your child's eligibility of being confirmed. The Archdiocese of Washington requires 85% attendance at all preparatory classes for any sacrament.

First Communion Parent Meeting: For those parents who missed the meeting on February 11, it is your responsibility to make arrangements to pick up your child's books. If your child's books are not picked up by March 14th, consider waiting until next year to begin the preparation all over again. It takes time to prepare these children and we will not be doing them any good by rushing through the process. Christ is ever ready to receive us; it behooves on us to take the necessary steps to be properly formed and when it comes to the sacraments, there is no fast-track despite what our culture will have us believe. Please help us to help you and your child.

Drop-Off: Parents I continue to entreat you to be punctual. When children are dropped off late, it affects the whole class and that is really not fair to those who make the effort to get here on time. We must work together as a team and therefore take into consideration all that makes our Faith Formation work well for each one involved. The children are the ones who suffer the most when parents are late in dropping the off. The same applies to pick-up times. This has been pretty good so far with the exception of a few cases. Thank you for the effort you are making.

RCIA: Remember our elect in your prayers as we begin the last preparatory stages for full reception into the Church. Their enthusiasm and dedication need to be commended. Come join us during the Easter Vigil liturgy as they are received into the Church.



Mass Intentions for the Fourth Week of Lent

Monday, March 3

8:30 am Marita Richardson

Tuesday, March 4

8:30 am Margaret Cuthbert

7:00 pm Catholics and Bible Basics Class with Father Jeff

Wednesday, March 5

8:30 am Margaret Cuthbert

7:00 pm Confessions until 8pm in the church

Thursday, March 6

8:30 am Genevive Ibe (living- in thanksgiving)

Friday, March 7

8:30 am Karl Levoek (living)

7:30pm Stations of the Cross

Saturday, March 8—Vigil: Fifth Sunday of Lent

3:30 pm to 4:30pm—Confessions Fr. Bob

5:00 pm Gina Pezzuti Fr. Bob

Sunday, March 9: Fifth Sunday of Lent

8:00 am PJ Murphy & Family (living) Fr. Stan

9:30 am James & Caroline Curran Fr. Jeff

11:30am Frances Enahoro (living) Fr. Literal

Please Pray for: †The Sick and Homebound In Our Parish:

Fr. Augustine Kizito Abizi; Pearl Aitcheson; Sue Babbie; Ann Benson; Audrey Brown; Vicky Calizo; Arlene Case; Marco J. Clark; Fidel dela Cuesta; Eleanor DeMarco; Anne Diemer; Tom Donohue; Bob Drake; Mary Ennis; Ferris (Bo) George; Fr. Charles Green; Andrea Guiang; Gabriel Guzman; Joseph Harrison; Robert Hoke; Charles Jones; Katie Kennedy; Robyn Kirby; Herman Klotz; Msgr. Peter Long; Msgr. John Madigan; Nancy Maimone; Carol McDonagh; Bill Moore; Larry Murphy; Michael Nardozi; Joseph Sico; Anna Stewart; Veronica Verna; Phil Vullo; †**For Our Military Serving in Afghanistan or Iraq:** Spc. Michael J. Chiddo; Brian A. Densmore; Ryan A. Morgan † **For Our Deceased:** Gina Pezzuti; Herman Klotz † *Names will be placed on our prayer list for three weeks. To add a name or to request continuing prayers, call Tara Guevara at 301-459-4814*

Easter Items:

Easter Duty: The Easter Duty is more properly called the Paschal Precept. This states that all the faithful, after they have been initiated into the Eucharist, are obliged to receive Holy Communion at least once a year. This precept must be fulfilled between the First Sunday of Lent and Trinity Sunday. Those in serious sin are also bound to go to confession at least once a year, preferably in this time. (Canons 920 and 989)

Easter Flowers: The Easter mailing will soon arrive in your mailbox. Please be sure to fill out your Easter Flower offering in advance and enclose the names of those you wish to remember and honor prior to March 16th.

Other Items of Note:

Lit for Little Ones: The Catholic Standard is collecting gently used books and computer software for distribution at Catholic Elementary Schools of Washington, D.C., the Center City Consortium and Fiesta D.C.! Please contact Laurie Enceneat at 202-281-2409 for more information. Donations can be dropped off at the rectory between 8:30am and 3:00pm during the work week.