

## 4<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY IN LENT      2011

Michael is leaving school and life looks very exciting. He has enjoyed 6 happy years of Secondary School. He is nearly eighteen, is learning to drive and beginning to earn some money. Soon he will go to University, where he wants to study Law. Michael has a happy home and loving parents. He likes his home comforts and intends to commute to College, at least for the first year, until the pull of university life, he suspects, will finally lure him away from home completely. Michael is on the verge of life.

During his final days at school, Michael realized just how much he was going to miss the place. Good friends, good teachers, good times – all these were soon going to be left behind. Ahead of him lay new places, new faces and new challenges. The prospect felt quite daunting at times. It was then, during a farewell Mass at school, that the VCE leavers, Michael included, were given the present of a book to take with them into the future. It was entitled *Reflecting God's Presence*.

The book, by De La Salle Brother Bill Firman, former headmaster of De La Salle College in Malvern, was written in a way that appealed to the young people, and is full of wisdom, the wisdom of the Gospel. The book was meant as a companion for the journey through life. It was a light to guide on the road. We do not know what lies ahead of us, or what challenges we may meet. But a light to guide us, a companion on life's journey, is precious indeed.

Today, in the Gospel, a man born blind will be our companion and will help us to see clearly. This poor man has never known what it is to see. His world is darkness. More than that he is sometimes despised for his condition, as if he himself is to blame, as if his blindness is a punishment from God. But that is not so, and Jesus plainly says so. This man will help us **all** now to come to see who Jesus really is, while those with sight, the people who think they know everything, will be revealed as unable to see.

The Pharisees are religious authorities. They pronounce on everything. All the rights and wrongs of life are defined and encoded by these people. Their word is

law, and just to make things worse, they are sure they have God on their side. Dangerous people !! Their occupation also brings them many worldly advantages and comforts, so if someone appears who seems to “rock the boat”, or disturb the peace, they are down on them very quickly.

These people quickly interrogate the blind man, who is blind no longer. The healing has disturbed their peace entirely and the healer appears as a threat to their position and authority. So unable are they to see the simple truth that stares them in the face that they cannot accept the idea that Jesus might be a good man, sent from God. It is not in their script. But the blind man knows and the blind man sees.

The blind man is now **our** teacher and our guide. The astonishing healing power of Jesus, he says, proves that he is doing God’s will. “Ever since the world began it is unheard of for anyone to open the eyes of a man born blind.; if this man were not from God he couldn’t do a thing.” Jesus is the man sent from God. He is our companion on the road of life. He is the light by which we see our way through this world.

Jesus is also the healer of **our** inability to see. What form does this lack of perception take in our lives ? Is it accidental, like the man born blind ? Or is it willful, like that of the Pharisees ? It may come from our native prejudices, or the weakness of selfishness. Or it may be more dangerous than that. It could be from willful pride, a sense of being superior to other people. But there is darkness in all of us, for sure.

St Paul’s advice today is: “Wake from your sleep, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.” Let that brightness be seen in “complete goodness and right living and truth”. Let **our** darkness be dispelled every day by Jesus, the light of the world.