

4th Sunday Lent

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4-2-11

Folks, the Archbishop has asked that today's entire message be given over to explaining the Catholic Ministries Appeal and asking you to give generously. All in favor of an entire homily on the Appeal, say "aye." That's not going to happen. So we have to make a deal: I am going to trust you to take the Appeal seriously, and to make a contribution, if your circumstances permit.

The Catholic Ministries Appeal funds good things: chaplains for hospitals, colleges, and jails; vocation work; St. Rita's School for the Deaf; Catholic Charities. Please consider a gift if you are able. There are pledge packets in the Gathering Space if you need one. [pause]

Second grade, in the front row, squinting at the blackboard. (Yes, they had blackboards back then; you can see them in museums.) A note to my parents: we think that Bill needs glasses. (I need glasses? Doesn't everyone squint?) My first pair seemed like a miracle: "THIS is what the world is supposed to look like! The trees are so beautiful, the sky is so blue!"

Twenty years later, another miracle: contact lenses. I can still remember the day: "I thought I could see OK—until this moment! How clear and bright everything is!"

Twenty five years later, another miracle: cataract surgery and lens implants on both eyes. It was absolutely biblical: "For the first time, I can see perfectly—the fine print, the stars." What was a miracle for Jesus is now outpatient surgery.

It's odd: you think you can see OK—until you get your vision corrected. Then you realize what you've been missing. Anyway, now I'm up to trifocals.

Now, the exciting part: scholars now tell us that instead of using saliva and clay to help the blind man to see, Jesus actually gave him special GLASSES. And due to my many connections to Israel, I have for us today—this will be hard to believe—I have several pairs of glasses from the time of Jesus. Let's take a look!

This first pair is just wonderful! These are 3-D glasses. When you wear these, you can look beyond a person's appearance into their heart. These are especially good for really seeing a person of some other race, some other country, or some other political party.

Here's another pair that Jesus would give to blind people. These glasses are for distance. When Jesus puts these on someone, they can see further. They can see beyond their own concerns and interests, beyond their own back yard and preoccupations.

Glasses from the time of Jesus! What great archeology! This pair is very special. They are the "marriage eyeglasses." These let you look at your wife, or husband, or old friend with fresh eyes. You finally see someone you might take for granted once again when you wear these.

Jesus the ophthalmologist. Jesus the optician. Jesus who opens our eyes.

Here's the last pair, the best of all. (Let me take them out of their case.) When you wear these priceless, ancient glasses to Mass,

you can look at the consecrated bread and see that it really is Jesus. If you wear them anywhere else, you can see God in everyone you meet.

I will have these in the Gathering Space to borrow, but don't fight over them!