

**Homily for March 21, 2004
Fourth Sunday of Lent
(A Cycle, 2nd Scrutiny)**

By Father Charles Bowes

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

The great gift we give to God is our need that stimulates our trust in God.

Last week, water. This week, light. The symbols of joy and new life are increasing weekly!

This week, a blind man receives sight...and no one around him can believe it. Those who saw him begging don't recognize him, his parents disavow him, and those Pharisees and scribes are suspicious that he is cured on the Sabbath – surely there's something sinful in this miracle. There just has to be something bad about all this good.

But the man himself has no problem with the healing. It's all very clear to him – he couldn't see, the man touched his eyes with dirt and told him to go wash, and when he did, the world was before him. What did he think when this new world was revealed? Did he suddenly put faces to voices he'd been hearing from his begging place? Did the very wall against which he had sat, soaking up the warmth of the sun, look immense? Did he know what colors were? Did he understand dimensions and distance?

What he did understand is that he was changed... profoundly, deeply, and irrevocably. He had been given a gift, and all he could do was receive it. Something, someone greater than he touched his life.

See how lavish God is in God's will to heal, to mend and to make whole? Even the pain, even the blindness has a purpose – it's so God could have someone to whom He could give, someone to whom He

could give himself. Dare we trust God that much to bring more out of our less?

Last week, the living water was given to the most unworthy, and she was transformed (one week, remember, after Jesus himself was transfigured). This week a man receives light of all kinds and is fearless in his acceptance and embrace of his changed condition.

The people around him saw only the external – a cure so phenomenal must mean that it was a different guy after all (or maybe he'd been faking all this time). And no cure done on the Sabbath could be from God.

Nonsense, said the now-sighted man, looking around eagerly for his savior to embrace and serve him. Miracles happen on the Sabbath most particularly, in the context of our communities. Those seeking the sacraments of initiation have found something in our midst that inspires and delights them. We can share their newfound light so that God's light will shine even more brightly among us as we celebrate yet another week of scrutinies in which our elect for the Easter sacraments again name for us our blessed need and sin...so we can invite, trust God to draw near precisely there.

And a week from this Monday evening is our parish Lenten service of reconciliation...a chance to name and claim all the unloving choices and struggles, and trust God to draw near with healing and peace.

The great gift we give to God is our need that stimulates our trust in God.