

MARCH 15, 2026 FATHER FRANCIS SALASAR

A friend once shared a story from his college days. During a camping trip he misplaced his glasses. At first, he thought he could manage without them, but as evening came, the world around him slowly dissolved into blur. The trees, the path, even the faces of his friends. What unsettled him most was not the darkness itself, but the realization of how little he could see without being aware of it.

When he finally found his glasses and put them on, everything snapped back into focus. Colours sharpened, faces became clear, and familiar surroundings felt almost new. "It made me realize," he said, "how often I move through life only half-seeing, even when my eyes are open."

That experience captures the heart of today's Gospel. In John's Gospel, Jesus heals a man who was blind from birth. Yet, this miracle is about more than restoring physical sight. It is about opening the eyes of faith.

On this fourth Sunday of Lent, traditionally called Laetare Sunday, we pass from the austerity of Lent to rejoice, because the light of Easter is already breaking through. Christ is at work, even now, opening our eyes in ways we may not immediately recognize.

When the disciples encounter the blind man, they ask Jesus, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" The question reflects a common belief of the time, that suffering must always be the result of personal sin. But Jesus corrects their thinking. "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," he says, and so the man's condition becomes the place where God's work will be revealed.

In this response, Jesus reshapes how we understand suffering. Our faith does not promise a life free from pain. What it promises is that suffering is never meaningless in the hands of God. Even hardship can become a

place of grace. Through Christ, suffering is not erased, but transformed into healing, into witness, into deeper faith.

What is most striking in this Gospel however, is what happens after the healing. Instead of celebrating the miracle, the Pharisees fixate on rules and techniques. They argue over whether Jesus can truly be from God because he healed on the Sabbath. They interrogate the healed man, and even drag his parents into the questioning. In their effort to protect themselves they miss the obvious truth standing before them.

Ironically, the man who was blind grows in clarity and courage, while those who claim to see become increasingly blind. This is the deeper warning of the Gospel. Spiritual blindness has little to do with our eyes, and everything to do with our hearts. The Pharisees cannot see because they refuse to allow God to act beyond their expectations. Their self-righteousness closes them off to grace.

Lent invites each of us to ask an uncomfortable but necessary question: Where might we be blind? Perhaps we overlook the struggles of someone close to us. Perhaps we resist forgiveness, cling to judgement, or fail to recognize God's quiet presence in our own suffering. Often, we are blind not because God is absent, but because we are unwilling to see differently.

So, dear brothers and sisters, Lent is not simply about giving things up. It's about receiving new sight. Like the man born blind, we are invited to let Christ touch our lives, to wash in the waters of grace, and to allow our mission to be restored. To see as Jesus sees is to look with compassion, rather than judgement. With faith, rather than fear.

May this Lenten season lead us from darkness into light, from blindness into true sight, and may we have the humility to admit where we still need Jesus to open our eyes and our hearts.