



I read two sad pieces in advance of reading this scripture. One was that in Ireland, of the 150,000 visually or hearing impaired people, the unemployment rate for (so-called) disabled people remains a stubbornly high 30% (Census 2011). There are many factors. The second piece I read was that during World War II “blind” people worked in factories, but after the end of War and demobilization of troops, they were swiftly unemployed. It seemed that people were just too uncomfortable around blind people. Statistics, of course, are only part of the story. But the figures paint a stark reality.

### Lack insight

There certainly seems to have been considerable discomfort around our

friend, the man blind from birth, when his status changed. In the longer version of the Gospel reading today, he even has to assert his identity: “I am the man.” In fact, the longer version is well worth reading and reflecting on. (Go read it – it won’t kill you!) It’s so interesting that people of eyesight lack insight, especially insight into love and acceptance. It seems to be far easier to hurl abuse, to say, as they did of Jesus and the blind man, “You are a sinner.” In most cases, personal abuse shuts people up or, at the least, drives them away. It is far harder to say, “God has blessed you” or “I am wrong” or even “You might be right.” Notice how abandoned our hero becomes – parents, neighbours, friends – just about everyone abandons him before the trial except

(continued on back page)



Jesus. He hangs in there and receives the last troubling word in the longer version: "Your guilt remains."

### Lord looks at the heart

We are blind to so many things. People are rejected because of orientation, and in the Church we are struggling with real questions for real people in so many areas and aspects of life and the human condition. We are painfully and frustratingly slow and ponderous and make all kinds of wrong assumptions. The truth of the First Reading still rings true, where David is simply forgotten even by his own family when the prophet Samuel comes to anoint as King the Lord's

choice. "God does not see as man sees; man looks at appearance but the Lord looks at the heart."

With apologies to the Stanley Kubrick film of the same title, we truly go around with "Eyes Wide Shut". This may be a weekend when we advance our various timepieces by an hour, but there is no time to waste in seeing our world and each other with the heart, not the eyes, to acknowledge the fears, attachments and beliefs that live within us and can impair our vision. On Mothering Sunday, do come home... to your senses and your better self.

— Tom Cox

"Even if the life of a person has been a disaster, even if it is destroyed by vices, drugs, or anything else - God is in this person's life. You can, you must try to seek God in every human life. Although the life of a person is a land full of thorns and weeds, there is always a space in which the good seed can grow. You have to trust God."

— Pope Francis

### THIS WEEK (27 March - 2 April)

Mon	27	St John of Egypt
Tue	28	St Sixtus III
Wed	29	St Rubert
Thur	30	St John Climacus
Fri	31	St Benjamin
Sat	1	St Irene; St Celso
Sun	2	FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

### Readings

#### TODAY

1 Samuel 16:1,6-7,10-13  
Psalm 22:1-6  
Ephesians 5:8-14  
John 9:1-41

#### NEXT SUNDAY

Ezekiel 37:12-14  
Psalm 129:1-8  
Romans 8:8-11  
John 11:1-45



# St. Anthony's Parish, Belfast

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MASS TIMES & SERVICES (UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED)

Saturday Evening at 6.30pm. (English Parish Mass)

Sunday Morning (in Polish): 9.30am, 1pm & 7pm. (English Parish Mass): 11.30am

Weekdays: Monday, Tuesday & Thursday at 9.30am. Friday at 7.00pm.

Wednesday: Communion Service discontinued until further notice (Day off)

Holy Days of Obligation: Vigil Mass at 7.00pm & Morning of Feast Day 09.30am

Confessions: Before each Mass and By Arrangement. Baptisms: Saturdays at 4pm (3 weeks notice required)



## 4th SUNDAY OF LENT

Laetare Sunday

SEEING YOUR LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE GOSPELS

John 9:1-11

1. A long story like the one we have today provides many different points of entry for prayer. Read the story and stay with what resonates with you. Some possible points of entry are:

a. The blind man was healed. Can you recall occasions when some blindness of yours was taken away and you could see in a new way? What was that experience like for you?

b. The Pharisees claimed to be the ones who could see, who knew where God was to be found, when in fact they were blind. It was the man born blind who showed himself open to see the hand of God at work in what happened. There can be some of each in us. What has helped you to be open to seeing the hand of God at work in your life? Who have been the Jesus people who have led you to this point?

c. There are many characters in the story: Jesus, the blind beggar, the disciples, the neighbours, the blind man's parents, and the Pharisees. Put yourself in the position of each one and see what you learn from identifying with them.

John Byrne OSA. Email jpb Byrneosa@gmail.com

WE REMEMBER OUR DECEASED LOVED-ONES

Recently Deceased: Cliff Black, Molly Gubbins (mass on Sun 26th March at 11:30am), John McCann

Anniversaries: Bridget Curran, Fred McGreevy, Susan Gallagher, Fr Pat Gallagher

## READERS AND EUCHARISTIC MINISTERS

Sun 26th March

READERS:

Vigil Mass: Eamon Blaney & Carmel Blaney

Morning Mass: Sarah Corscadden & Kathryn Curran

EUCHARISTIC MINISTERS:

Vigil Mass: Stephen Murphy

Morning Mass: James Henderson

Sun 2nd April

READERS:

Vigil Mass: Ann Flanagan & Phyllis McGrillen

Morning Mass: Loretta Watson & Hannah Graham

EUCHARISTIC MINISTERS:

Vigil Mass: Frank Doherty

Morning Mass: Séamus Monaghan



**COLLECTIONS:** Many thanks for your contribution to last week's collection: Needy Parishes £528.97, Weekly £371.86, Monthly Stipend £15, Shrines £164.98. NEW BOXES OF ENVELOPES ARE AVAILABLE THIS WEEKEND (arranged by surname, alphabetically). Please note to reduce waste numbers have been re-attributed. If your details have changed, or if you would like to register for a box, please give your details to Fr McCann as soon as possible. Please consider signing a Gift Aid form so that the parish can claim back the Tax from the HMRC on your contributions. Your own Tax is not affected.

Trocaire Lenten Collection Boxes are available in the porch.

Lent Programme 2017 for the South & East Belfast Pastoral Area. Please find in the porch a group parish timetable of Lenten Programmes available for the parishes in the Pastoral Area.

World Meeting of Families Second Collection: Pope Francis has personally chosen Dublin to be the host diocese for the World Meeting of Families from 21-26 August 2018. Planning for this great national and international celebration of faith is well underway. Hosting this important event requires an enormous amount of planning and funding. The first national collection last year came to almost €800,000. In this regard a second national collection will be held on the weekend of 8 and 9 April 2017 (as in your box of envelopes). Your support for this collection would be greatly appreciated. Leaflets about the Meeting are available in porch.

Edmund Rice Schools Trust Annual Foundation Lecture, "Challenges and Opportunities for Catholic Tertiary Education in Today's Society," in St Mary's University College, Belfast, Wed 29th March at 7.30pm. Speaker: Professor Peter Finn, President, St Mary's University College. RSVP by 24th March. 028 90333205, or erstni@live.com.

Divine Mercy Holy Hour, Thursday 30th March 2017 7.30pm, Church of the Nativity. Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, singing of the Divine Mercy Chaplet, Mass 8pm

Carmelite Pilgrimage to Lisieux 2017 Thursday 28 September to Monday 2nd November 2017. (4 nights). In Lisieux for the Feast Day Celebrations including the Torchlight Procession of St Therese Relics. Leader: Fr David Weakliam O. Carm. Cost 668 plus insurance 25. All correspondence to St Therese National Office, 56 Aungier Street, Dublin 2, Ireland. Tel (01) 8387281. Email: info@sttherese.com. Flyers in porch.

Blessing of the Pipe Organ and Concert with the Palestrina Boys Choir. Friday, 7th April at 7.30pm in Our Lady of the Assumption Church, Newcastle. Come and join us as we prepare to enter Holy Week with an exquisite repertoire of music sung for us by the highly acclaimed Palestrina Boys Choir of the Pro-Cathedral Dublin led by their conductor, Blánaid Murphy. This concert is in support of the Pipe Organ Fund. No cover charge or tickets necessary, a retiring collection will be taken up. Please note the date for your diary.

Cantiunculae Concerts—Dates for your diary. Fr McCann's choir will be staging the following concerts:

Cantiunculae. Music through the generations: /Friday 21st March, in 1st Presbyterian Church, Rosemary Street, Belfast, presenting religious and secular, popular music, by Cantiunculae choir and their family members. 7pm. Proceeds in aid of Glebe House.

Cantiunculae Faure's Requiem with the McDonnell Trio, Friday 5th May in St Anthony's Church, Willowfield, at 7pm. Proceeds in aid of Renovation of the Willowfield COI Parish Hall. More details posted later in subsequent bulletins.

The Hospice Walks: The Hospice Walk is one of the biggest fundraising events which take place across Northern Ireland and we would encourage as many people as possible to take part to help raise vital funds in support of Hospice care services for children and adults living with life-limiting conditions. Please see poster in porch.

St Anthony's Parish Statement of Accounts: The Diocesan Financial Policy (2004) encourages parishes to publicly print a Yearly Income/Expenditure Statement of Accounts. It was thought to wait for two years so that comparisons between the current/previous year statements can be made. If you have any enquiries, contact Fr McCann.

Income vs Expenditure	Year End:	2014	2015
Income including priest's stipends and collections, missalettes, shrines, other income, etc.		£63,175.10	£59,319.24
Expenditure including rent, rates, repairs, priest's stipends paid out, administration costs, and diocesan collections paid out .		£66,304.43	£58,531.32
Profit/Loss		-£3,129.33	£787.92

Elmwood Chamber Orchestra. Fr Gerard Magee (Chaplain, QUB), will conduct the Elmwood Chamber Orchestra in a programme of music by Grieg, JS Bach, Elgar and Beethoven next Sunday, 2nd April, in the Great Hall at Queen's University. The concert will begin at 3pm. Entrance: Adult: £10; Student/OAP: £5. Enquiries tel: 028 9066 9737.

☺ **DON'T FORGET: Clocks go forward 1 hour this weekend!**

Parish Safeguarding. Can you please ensure that all Children and Vulnerable Adults are accompanied at all times when entering the Sacristy / Toilet facilities. If you have any queries regarding the Safeguarding Policy please contact a member of the Parish Safeguarding Committee. Many Thanks. Fr Henry PP.