

## **“Humility” – 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent(A)**

Once I was inspired by All Fools Day to play a practical joke on a friend. He was expecting me to holiday with him, to which both of us were looking forward. But I sent him a message on All Fools Day to say that I couldn't come, with an accompanying explanation which I thought was very funny. It was but my friend being a good friend was too upset at the idea that I wasn't coming; he missed the humour and thought me serious. It took quite a few hours to sort out the mess. And feeling stupid and low about the whole thing - no longer thinking myself witty but truly humbled - I realised that my real motivation had not been so much to be funny as to test my friend's love. Not a terribly nice thing to do.

Being humbled is good for us. It is rarely a pleasant experience but it is necessary because we are good at lying to ourselves and keeping ourselves closed off from the truth.

The word humble means 'of the ground.' When you are humbled you feel laid low. But the word 'homo' - Latin for 'human being' - also means 'of the ground.' And so when life or our actions humble us we have an opportunity to return to who we really should be; we have a chance to stop playing at gods and being truly human. Being humbled helps us to see.

And so Christ takes some earth - and with his spittle makes a paste and places it on the blind man's eyes. That which is of the ground, mixed with God's love and grace, makes the man whole again: he sees.

Tonight, four women will present themselves for our prayers as they prepare to be received into the Church or make their First Holy Communion. Their humility in being open to God's presence in their lives inspires us all. They remind us to never think we are sorted or complete in our life with Christ. There is always room to grow and that is what we are all trying to do together this Lent. We don't have to pretend we are great; we shall trust in the greatness of God. The blind man seemed to be the needy one but he was the one close to God. It was the religious leaders - who thought themselves witty - who couldn't see the truth.

When I was at seminary, I was involved in a number of projects, which were all very successful. To remind me of the worth of humility, a friend pinned these words of the Danish scientist, Piet Hein, to my door: 'The noble art of losing face may one day save the human race and turn it into eternal merit what weaker minds would call disgrace.' From embarrassments, from losing, from mistakes, we can all learn. It is what we learn from such moments and how we deal with them which are more likely to reveal 'the works of God' than human triumph and glory.

We are to try to do our best in everything and we shall celebrate each other's achievements. But the paradox of us humans is that when we feel most low because of personal weakness or failures then with God's grace we can often see the furthest. It was the blind man who saw Jesus. May God do great things in our blindness.