

OUR LADY OF PROVIDENCE CHAPEL
SAINT VINCENT HOSPITAL
WORCESTER MEDICAL CENTER
Fourth Sunday of Lent
March 19, 2023



Saint Irenaeus of Lyons - *Adversus Haereses*
That which the artificer, the Word, had omitted to form in the womb
(viz. the blind man's eyes), He then supplied in public, that the works of God
might be manifested in him.

CHAPEL SCHEDULE

Weekday Mass: (Monday-Friday at 12 noon)
Weekend Masses: Saturday: 4:00pm - Sunday: 7:30am & 4:00pm
Holy day Mass Schedule: afternoon prior at 4:00pm
Holy day proper at 12 noon and 4:00pm
Confessions: First Saturday of every month at 3:30pm
Department Telephone: 508.363.6246
Chapel Website: www.ourladyofprovidence.net

MASS INTENTIONS — LITURGICAL SCHEDULE

Saturday, March 18 *Vigil of the 4th Sunday of Lent*

4:00pm +Walter Granger by his daughter Virginia

Sunday, March 19 *Fourth Sunday of Lent - Laetare (or Joy) Sunday*

7:30am +Sr. Madeline Joy, SP by the alumnae of the former SVH School of Nursing

4:00pm +Elizabeth Anne O'Connor by the SVHSN alumnae

Monday, March 20 *Solemnity of Saint Joseph, spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary*

12:00nn +Adrienne Dubois

Tuesday, March 21

12:00nn For those soon-to-be married

Wednesday, March 22

12:00nn Asking Saint Joseph to guide making the best choice on a home

Thursday, March 23 *Saint Turibius of Mogrovejo, bishop* — Ramadan begins

12:00nn +Edwin “Ed” Lopes by his friends

Friday, March 24 *Friday of Lent — Day of Abstinence*

12:00nn +Robin Gates Furno

Saturday, March 25 *Vigil of the 5th Sunday of Lent*

4:00pm +Joan Malark

Sunday, March 26 *Fifth Sunday of Lent*

7:30am For the intention of various members of Slawek’s family

4:00pm +Mary Bradshaw by the SVHSN alumnae

The Key to Understanding the Day’s Liturgical Significance: *Sunday* is the day that the Church celebrates the Paschal mystery—the Lord’s Day—which, according to apostolic tradition, is the day of Christ’s Resurrection. The Sundays of Advent, Lent, and during the Easter Season take precedence over other celebrations. **Solemnities** honor significant religious events, beliefs or saints of the greatest importance and universal in their observance that begin at Vespers (or Evening Prayer) the day before. **Feasts** must be observed, though, less important than solemnities, hence, feasts are only observed on the natural day. **Memorials** are of two types: Either the observance is an **obligatory memorial**¹ or an **optional memorial**².

Toward a Better Understanding of The Gospels of Lent

The Gospel begins with this descriptive statement, “As Jesus passed by he saw a man blind from birth.” His disciples asked Him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” While it appears legitimate that someone be punished for their own sins, so it is plausible that this blindness could have been a punishment for sin. However, since he was “blind from birth,” it is impossible to sin before being born; perhaps, his blindness was the result of the sin of parents. They were reflecting the prevalent first-century thinking that he was blind as a punishment for sin. This hereditary type of sin serves as a prior indication of original sin. Only Jesus saw (Gk. εἶδεν) the blind man, but he did not see Jesus. The Greek verb *horaó* is part of the Johannine vocabulary and means “to see with the mind” or “to perceive with inward spiritual perception.” To see versus not being able to see is crucial to a proper understanding of this passage. Thus, Jesus takes the initiative to enter into the life of someone who cannot do so. Somehow, the blind man imperfectly knows that he cannot take the initiative either. Blind from birth, due to his condition, he has been forced to be humble and for his lifetime—up until this point—he could do nothing without the help of others. His only hope was in God. The man’s humility, though, is what Jesus notices, even amid the conflicting voices of His disciples, his parents, neighbors, or the Pharisees. Jesus rejects their hypothesis that all physical evils are a punishment for sin. Rather, sometimes a physical evil is permitted by God to afflict even the just, such as Job, in order to bring about and manifest some greater good. This was operative in this encounter. After recognizing neither the man nor his parents were guilty of sin, recall the words that Jesus said just before he healed the blind man, “While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” Jesus reveals the real reason for the blindness: The man was born in darkness so that the light of God might shine upon the whole world. While Jesus gave the man born blind the ability to see which he had never had been able to do, as the recipient of the cure, Jesus does not simply say, “Receive your sight.” No, instead he does something that must have been very humiliating for the blind man. He makes mud from his saliva and smears this mud on his eyes. Notice, there is no initial promise of a cure, just mud in his eyes and on his face, and, then, the command to go wash in the pool of Siloam. The blind man accepts all this without a word of protest, a sign of his great humility. The remainder of the passage continues with the bitter criticism of the Pharisees, denouncing that the cure had been done in violation of the demand of the Sabbath rest. Among themselves, those holy men discussed the

Saint Clement of Alexandria — *Christ the Educator*

This is what happens with us, whose model the Lord made Himself. When we are baptized, we are enlightened; being enlightened, we become adopted sons: becoming adopted sons, we are made perfect; and becoming perfect, we are made divine. "I have said, it is written, 'you are gods and all of you sons of the most High.'" This ceremony is often called *free gift, enlightenment, perfection, and cleansing — cleansing*, because through it we are completely purified of our sins; *free gift*, because by it the punishments due to our sins are remitted; *enlightenment*, since by it we behold the wonderful holy light of salvation, that is, it enables us to see God clearly; finally, we call it *perfection* as needing nothing further, for what more does he need who possesses the knowledge of God? It would indeed be out of place to call something that was not fully perfect a gift of God. He is perfect; therefore, the gifts He bestows are also perfect. Just as at His command all things came into existence, so, on His mere desire to give, there immediately arises an overflowing measure of His gifts. What is yet to come, His will alone has already anticipated.

Lord's character. Then, they appealed to the man whose sight had been created anew, as to his opinion respecting Jesus, at first he said that He was a prophet. Going further, they appealed to the man's parents, as to whether or not the man was truly blind from birth. For a second time, they brought the formerly blind man before them, while urging him to "Give God the praise!" and not Jesus. Their vile abuse of the man for showing an inclination to respect and speak in terms of praise of our Lord seems unwarranted. He replied to them courageously saying, "One thing I do know is that I was blind and now I see." The cured man added, "...if one is devout and does [God's] will, [God] listens to him." Irritated, the Pharisees expelled him from the synagogue or the place of meeting. Jesus sought him out and posed this question, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" Asking who the Son of Man was, Jesus said, "You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he." The gift of faith or, at least, the gift of spiritual enlightenment, was bestowed on him by the Lord. Our Lord denounced the Pharisees for their perversity and resistance to God's heavenly light, thereby bringing upon themselves the more grievous sin. The formerly blind man saw what had been done for him as an action much more than healing, marvelous though that was. Being born blind, he had never seen anything. What Jesus did was nothing less than an act of creation.

Eucharistic Revival Began on 19 June 2022 & Concludes with the National Eucharistic Congress: Indianapolis 17-21 July 2024

The memorial of your Son Jesus Christ — our Passover and our surest Peace

Jesus dirtied the man's eyes with mud representing the man's blindness, and the water not only washed the mud away, but washed away his blindness. The mud and water are symbols of a deeper reality. His recovery of sight in turn is a symbol of an even deeper reality still – his coming to see Christ as the Messiah, his coming to true faith in Jesus. In the Eucharist, bread and wine are signs of a deeper and greater reality – the true presence of Jesus Christ. They cease to be bread and wine and, instead, become the True Presence: Christ among us. Yet bread and wine do not lose their symbolic power – as regular bread and wine feed and strengthen us, so, through the Eucharist Jesus literally feeds and sustains us with His grace and presence.

Penance vs. the Virtue of Penance

Takashi Nagase (1918-2011) was an interpreter for the Japanese Secret Police during the construction of the infamous Burma Railway. Eric Lomax (1919-2012) was a former British POW whose torture sessions Nagase had been involved in. In 1993, the two men met and what happened was retold in Lomax's autobiography the *Railway Man*. Nagase's post-war life as an activist for reconciliation between former enemies, graphically illustrates the concept of *penance as a virtue* in the following way: His transformation was at a fundamental level of character and, as such, penance worked to 'open the door' to other vital virtues, moral goods, and relationships. Moreover, he engaged closely with the truth of his own past actions and acknowledged the history of the context in which he committed them, though he did so at the service of the future-oriented repair of the harm done. Yet, it was Nagase's deep shame for what he had done that motivated such just actions with their practical and spiritual significance. In combining personal transformation and the interpersonal exchange with Lomax, plus his advocacy for communal conversion, Nagase also demonstrated the political implications of the virtue of penance.

The RCIA & the Period of Purification & Enlightenment

The third step of the RCIA: Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (Lat. *Ordo Initiationis Christianae Adultorum*) is a period of spiritual purification and enlightenment. This corresponds with the season of Lent and culminates with the Easter Vigil when those to be initiated are baptized, confirmed, and share in the Eucharist for the first time. According to the rubrics, it is "a period of more intense preparation, consisting more in interior reflection... to purify the minds and hearts of the elect as they search their consciences and do penance... This period is intended as well to enlighten the mind and hearts of the elect with a deeper knowledge of Christ the Savior" (RCIA, n. 139). Lent is meant to help not only help the Elect, but all members of the Church, to come to a real understanding of sinfulness and of the need for ongoing conversion and repentance. On the one hand, the elect are called to intense purification—to come to grips with their sin and their desperate need of salvation and grace. At the same time, their minds are to be enlightened with a deep and personal knowledge and intimacy with Christ who is their Savior. As the Elect prepare to be baptized, life-long Catholics prepare for the solemn renewal of the promises made for us at our baptism—to reject Satan and sin, while professing belief in Christ as Savior!

Lent - Quadragesima - Purification & Enlightenment

Last week, in the first of the three catechumenal Gospels, Jesus spoke of living water. Tired and thirsty, the Lord sat at Jacob's Well and when a Samaritan woman came to draw water, He asked her for a drink. She was shocked because Jesus was obviously Jewish and should despise the Samaritans as heretics. Jesus ignored her observation and said, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water [Gk. ὕδωρ ζῶν]" (Jn 4:10). To truly understand the reference to living water, here is another instance where Jesus used those words, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scriptures said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.' But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (Jn 7:37-39). The Spirit is living water that flows out of hearts redeemed by Christ and, then, Spirit-filled believers bring life and light into the world. This week, Jesus gives sight to a man who had been born blind (Jn 9:1-41). This passage forms part of the Book of Signs in Saint John's Gospel (Jn 2-11) whose chapters are marked by seven signs or miracles. Unlike the other signs, wherein a short narrative section is bookended by long discourses, this penultimate of the signs briefly recounts the healing, while provoking actions and reactions to what occurred. As a result, the curing of the man's blindness appears more like a long discourse. Worthy of note is the fact that Jesus intervenes minimally in the miracle, though He remains in the foreground throughout. Indirectly, Jesus endures a kind of substitute trial by means of the questions that are posed to the blind man and his parents. This passage can be understood on a variety of levels. The obvious way is to focus on the diverse reactions to the man's healing. Another is to analyze the interplay between the Johannine vocabulary such as the words *knowledge* and *ignorance* or *blind* versus *sighted*. It precipitates a trial motif and, then, causes us to assess our knowledge or lack thereof about Jesus and the titles attributed to Him in the passage. From the outset of the Fourth Gospel, Saint John described the coming of the Word into the world in terms of "true light, which enlightens everyone" (Jn 1:9). Thus, giving sight to the man born blind illustrates Jesus doing the work for which the Father had sent Him. Unlike the disciples, who wanted to know if the man's blindness was the result of his own sin or that of his parents, the fundamental question is whether or not Jesus is the Light of the world? The Lord Himself noted that the works (Gk. ἔργον=a deed that carries out an inner desire) that He did were sufficient testimony. The deeds Christ accomplished were greater testimony than even what John the Baptist had done! Again and again, Jesus repeats that point, even adding, "If I perform [my Father's works]...believe the works, so that you may realize and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father" (Jn 10:38). The evidence that Jesus was sent from God and that He is the Light of the world, then, is the deeds that He accomplished. Those works (or signs) attest to the Scriptural evidence in regard to who God is and how the Lord God works in the world. If anyone does not see or perceive that in faith, then they must be blind. Self-examination is the never-ending question that all believers must engage in and to see whether or not what the biblical evidence holds out is in accord with what is believed. Saint John often juxtaposes deeds of darkness that even the children of light engage in. Constant vigilance and an examination of conscience are needed, so as to not unwittingly fall into blindness. Today,

the greatest threat to a lively faith is honest mediocrity. Even more than allowing Christ our Light to permeate the inner darkness and expose a laissez-faire philosophy, the Light beaming forth from Christ also illuminates all that is good. The attractiveness of light beaming out from good deeds draws believers toward such goodness, which is a pale reflection of God who alone is all-good. The parents of the man born blind, despite acknowledging the man was their son and blind from birth, also balked at answering the question, "How does he now see?" Most believers, like those parents, cringe at positively witnessing to their faith in Christ; yet, playing it safe and out of fear of offending anyone such a tactic belies the fact that silence on crucial matters is equivalent to complicity. The elements of the man's cure were simple – mud mixed with saliva, applied to his eyes and, then, told to wash in the pool of Siloam—after having done all that, the man returned to Jesus able to see! Conversely, only by a number of small steps does the formerly blind man's eyes of faith increase in their ability to believe in Jesus. The gradual increase in faith and recognizing who Jesus really is constitutes a blueprint for all believers. God always has the initiative in matters of faith; yet, in retrospect, you not only can see its growth, but can almost determine the point at which you accepted the gift of faith. This next-to-the last of the seven signs in the Fourth Gospel is a treatise on faith, under the action of the Spirit, which persists until reaching its summit by acknowledging Christ as the Light of the world. All this occurred while Jesus was in Jerusalem for one of the annual pilgrimage feasts, namely Sukkōt or the Feast of Tabernacles. During that week-long celebration, there was much merry-making and the pilgrims all waved the festive palm-branch called the *lulab* that included twigs of myrtle and willow while holding a yellow citron (or Etrog) in the other hand. Booths were erected in gardens or on terraces marking the end of the harvest and, more importantly, commemorating the Israelites entry into the Promised Land. A strong messianic emphasis increased the hope for the coming of the Messiah, marking the beginning of the end of sinful human history. Aware of that background, it is not surprising that lively discussions were taking place about who Jesus was as well as a greater attempt made to understand His teaching about the Temple. Amid that background, Jesus declared the great messianic revelation, "On the last and greatest day of the feast [of Tabernacles], Jesus stood up and exclaimed, "Let anyone who thirsts come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture says: 'Rivers of living water will flow from within him'" (Jn 7:38-39). Then, again during Sukkot, Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." While the priests went to draw water from the fountain of Siloam, carrying it back solemnly to the Temple in a golden pitcher, they poured the water on the corner of the altar at night, in the Court of Women. At the end of the first day of the Feast, the Temple was gloriously illuminated. According to the Mishnah (part of the oral tradition of the rabbis), gigantic candelabra stood within the court of the women. Each of the four golden candelabra is said to have been 50 cubits high. A cubit is somewhere between 18 and 22 inches, so we're talking about candelabra that were about 75 feet tall! Each candelabra had four branches, and at the top of every branch there was a large bowl. Four young men bearing 10 gallon pitchers of oil would climb ladders to fill the four golden bowls on each. And then the oil in those bowls was ignited. As the Temple area was alighted, the True Light of the World stood in their midst.