

**4 Lent A 2008**  
**St. Raphael, Springdale, AR**

Folks, it's amazing how much we miss in life, how we are blind to things all around us. President Theodore Roosevelt lamented how rarely people pay attention to what they hear. Once at a gala ball, he grew tired of meeting people who returned his remarks with stiff, mindless pleasantries. So, he began to greet people with a smile, saying: "I murdered my grandmother this morning." Most people, so nervous about meeting him, didn't even hear what he said. But one diplomat did. Upon hearing the president's remark, he leaned over and whispered to him, "I'm sure she had it coming to her!" Now, I don't want anyone getting any ideas about what to do with their grandmothers! A friend of mine who is a well known impressionist painter once explained to me how the great impressionists painted. They actually paint the color of the light between them and the object. For example, Monet would paddle out into his boat at exactly 6:30 a.m. to paint a certain scene for 5 minutes, and then stop and paddle back. He would return the following morning at exactly 6:30 a.m. and again paint for only 5 minutes. You see, after 5 minutes, the light was no longer the same. Pretty nice to have a job where you only had to work for 5 minutes a day! Monet paid attention to something that most of us miss, the light around us. It's amazing how blind we often are to what's going on around us.

In the first reading today the prophet Samuel is sent to the family of Jesse, and he almost misses the one God wants him to anoint as king. When Samuel sees the seven older

sons of Jesse, he thinks: "Surely, one of these will be the king!" But God does not choose any of them. Finally, the youngest, David, comes in, "a youth handsome to behold and making a splendid appearance." That kind of reminds me of the difference between my older brother, Paul, and me – we're exactly like that! Anyway, God tells Samuel to anoint David. Why? Because God notices what Samuel missed: God sees the heart of David. In today's gospel Jesus cures the man born blind. But if you paid close attention – and didn't miss it! – there are people who are more blind than the blind man; they are the Pharisees. Their obsession with rigorous obedience to the law has blinded them to the needs of the people. They don't even notice how good it is that a blind man has been healed. Like those nervous guests at President Roosevelt's gala ball, so, too, the prophet Jesse and the Pharisees miss the miracles all around them.

You all know that William Shakespeare wrote 37 plays, among the more popular were "Hamlet," "Macbeth," and "Romeo and Juliet." But one of my favorites is a less well-known play called "King Lear." It's about an elderly king who dotes on his daughters. Two of them are greedy and ambitious and have little love for their father, but the youngest, Cordelia, truly loves Lear. But because Lear likes to hear the flattery of the older daughters, he banishes Cordelia to France. In a very dramatic scene, King Lear is wandering about half crazed in a storm, talking to mice. Just then, a court jester counsels Lear and helps him to recover his sanity and reconcile with Cordelia. You know, when you

think about it, I, too, have often been saved from insanity by a court jester here at St. Raphael, by the name of Dc. Chuck. But Shakespeare's point is that the court jester – the so-called "Fool" – is really the one who is wise and sees what the king missed: the true love of his youngest daughter. How often we miss what's going on around us!

My friends, today ask Jesus to heal your blindness, not of the eyes in your head, but rather to open the eyes of your heart, to see what's going on around you. One of the things I ask engaged couples to do is make a list of the 5 qualities they like about each other. They usually give me a list of 10! Well, let me invite you married couples to do that today: make a list of the 5 qualities you love about your spouse. Can you still think of 5? Sometimes we focus so much on a person's weaknesses and failings that we're blind to their talents and strengths. Ask Jesus to open your eyes to see your spouse. Sometimes we struggle to love our grandparents and parents, and like that diplomat talking to Roosevelt think: "Well, I'm sure she had it coming to her!" Ask Jesus to heal your blindness to love your parents and grandparents. Yesterday morning, I went to the Circle of Life Hospice to visit with a lady whose husband has been dying for several months with an inoperable brain tumor. She said: "I want to yell out to God, 'Why!?' But I just thank Him for this man and our marriage and our love. My husband has really been an inspiration to me in this whole time." Here was a woman who could see. Even in her pain, she didn't miss the miracles all around her.

The great impressionist painters noticed and captured the light between them and the object. They noticed the light that other people missed, and that light helped them to paint the beauty of the world. My friends, Jesus is the true Light of the world. May Jesus open our eyes so that we can see the beauty of the world around us, so that we can see the beauty of the people around us, so that we will not miss any more miracles.

Praised be Jesus Christ!