

Today we talk about Piety, the gift of the Holy Spirit. Piety is not being folded hands, it is not mere outward religiosity but symbolizing Christ's presence. It is that genuine religious spirit which makes us turn to the Father as his children and to grow in our love for others, seeing them as our brothers and sisters, members of God's family. Here a person shows reverence for God as a loving Father and loves and respects others as children of God. It also helps us have a loving obedience toward the teachings and commandments, respecting them as expressions of God's love for us. It also enables us to have devotion to Blessed Virgin Mary and all the saints. The gift of piety perfects the virtue of justice, enabling us to fulfill our obligations to God and neighbor willingly and joyfully. For example, St. Teresa of Kolkata always taught her sisters to treat those they cared for as though they were caring for Jesus Himself, and to do so with a joyful heart and with a smile. Piety gives us the disposition to serve God with tenderness and devotion. It helps us in prayer not as a task or burden but as an act of joyful love by giving us peace during times of distractions, dryness and aridity. In this regard St. Paul wrote: "For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship. The Spirit helps us to call God "Abba Father". Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words" (Rom 8:15, 26)

In the first reading says "Not as man sees does God see, because man sees the appearance but the LORD looks into the heart." God does not look the outside appearance of David in choosing to be the king of Israel but the beauty and simplicity of heart. In the second reading St. Paul tells us that Jesus Christ is our light. He comes to illumine us in truth. So we to be children of light, producing every kind of goodness. In the gospel we see an encounter between Christ and a blind beggar. This encounter brings the blind man to regain his sight both physical and spiritual. In the gospel we see how different people approached the blind beggar and his healing. The apostles thought it was the result of the sin that he was born blind. It was a judgment looking at the outside appearance of him and not with any love and concern for him. It was not to bring any changes in the life of the blind man. The parents of the blind man knew that their son was born blind and it was Jesus who gave him the sight but they were afraid to profess their faith and failed to witness the healing done by Jesus. They were silent in their faith. Piety does not mean being quite about our faith but to live and witness it in life. We also see the attitude of the Pharisees who never did good to others nor remained without finding fault with those who did good. They never helped the blind man when he was blind but when he was able to see they began to question him and drove him out of synagogue. They judged him as a sinner that he was born blind. They wanted to find fault with Jesus who gave him sight.

In many situation we too are like the apostles, the Pharisees and parents of the blind man that we approach a problem or judge a person based on our personal likes and interest and outer appearances. We fail to look at the heart of others with love and respect and fail to profess our faith because of fear of facing difficulties and fulfilling our obligation. Very often we too fail to do good and encourage others to do good. We try to find fault with others and judge them wrong. This is not the true piety. But Jesus approached the blind man with love and respect and gave him both

physical and spiritual sight. He did not judge him but helped him in his helplessness. The true piety, the true devotion to God grounds in our love for God and love for one another, to look at others as our brothers and sisters. We too are spiritually blind to see others as God sees and to love others as God loves. We need the gift piety, the gift of the Holy Spirit to enable us to love God and others as children of same Father and witness our faith even in our difficulties and sufferings. The fasting, prayer and charity that we do in the lent is the practice of piety, the gift of the Holy Spirit. Let us ask Jesus to heal our blindness, particularly our failure to love and see those close to us, not just the outward appearances, but the heart above all to see as God sees. Let us open our eyes to see, to relate at a deeper level with God, to symbolize Christ's presence and His love and mercy to others in the way we live.