

## IV TRINITY 2015

### SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

FATHER CRAIG LOONEY

ROMANS 8.18 ST. LUKE 6.36



Way back in 1972, Johnny Nash wrote a song that goes like this:

*I can see clearly now, the rain is gone,  
I can see all obstacles in my way  
Gone are the dark clouds that had me blind  
It's gonna be a bright (bright), bright (bright)  
Sun-Shiny day.*

The song is about hope when facing adversity and not allowing the obstacles we encounter in life to lead us into despair. Instead, once those adversities are met head on...like the dark clouds that sometimes come with the rain and then go away...even obstacles in our way become visible and we begin to see things clearly.

Obstacles can be physical things that make everyday life a struggle. They can be emotional obstacles that keep things cloudy. They can be spiritual obstacles that keep us from seeing ourselves as God sees us...and as we want to see ourselves...and as we want to be seen by others.

When we become aware of spiritual obstacles in another person's life that keep them from seeing clearly...we want to reach out. It is tempting for us to want to say, "Let me show you the way". Before we do that...we need to take a good, hard, look at ourselves. Do we have some obstacles in our way we need to deal with first?

The Gospel is about God's mercy toward us...and our mercy toward others. Jesus tells us we can expect God our Father to apply the same standards to us we apply to others. If we are overly harsh in judging someone, we cannot expect anything less from God. We do not want to become obstacles that get in the way of God's mercy toward others any more than we want to become obstacles that get in the way of God's mercy toward us.

In the *Oxford American Prayer Book Commentary*, Father Massey Shepherd comments on today's Gospel reading which was intended to be used on Ember Days as advice for the clergy but it applies to all of us:

*"Harsh judgments and petty fault-finding have been a besetting temptation to religious leaders, not only to the Jewish teachers of our Lord's time,*

*but to the priests of Christ's Church. Among religious people generally there is often a tendency to ignore in themselves the very faults and failings which they are ready to find in others."*

Jesus tells us that would be like the blind leading the blind...or we might say not being able to see the forest for the trees. Obstacles that keep us spiritually blind must be taken care of first before we can presume to help someone else overcome their obstacles. Otherwise we both fall down in the ditch...that only makes it more difficult to get back out...for both of us.

Saint Paul tells us that we can expect obstacles to get in our way during this lifetime...what he calls in the Epistle...the things that we suffer at this present time. Those obstacles can be physical...things that make us literally fall down...or they can be spiritual...things that cause us to lose our sight of God.

Saint Paul knew what he was talking about...he experienced physical and spiritual obstacles throughout his lifetime. We can learn much about endurance from our friend, Paul. What he never did was give up hope. Whatever obstacles we encounter now, Paul assures us, cannot possibly compare with the awesome glory of being in God's presence in heaven.

Our job now is to make certain those obstacles don't wreck us...and we need to make certain we are not obstacles wrecking other people's lives. If we are looking for a standard to guide us...let's start with the Summary of the Law we hear at Mass...LOVE GOD ABOVE ALL ELSE...LOVE OTHERS LIKE WE WANT TO BE LOVED.

While we run the obstacle course called life we will encounter challenges...physical, emotional and spiritual. There is a lot of truth in Johnny Nash's song. When obstacles hidden by darkness become visible to us in the light we can go around them.

Jesus is our ultimate hope...he is THE light that makes obstacles in our lives visible so we can avoid them...especially those obstacles that get in the way of our spiritual lives. Jesus is the light that overcomes darkness...he is the light that darkness can never put out.

Now that is something to sing about!

