

I'm sure Father Tom will agree with me, and maybe in several years ... Sister Pat, too ... will join us in saying - "It's not easy being 50 years old!"

The past few months, I got a new eye doctor.

My old eye doctor would renew my old prescription - the same one I'd had for the past 20 years; write it down, sign it, and let me order my discounted cheap, bargain basement contact lenses off of the internet.

And then I was good for a couple more years.

He got my co-pay, and whatever the insurance gave him. And I got new boxes of contacts.

My new eye doctor has been a bit more discerning.

She pointed out that the el-cheap-o contacts were suffocating my eyeballs. Starving them of oxygen ... which explained why they were always red and itchy.

She put in correction for astigmatism, and now I can actually see telephone wires and street signs.

And she corrected for reading, too - so I don't have to step away from the pulpit ... or swing my head from side to side ... to read the fine print.

It most certainly isn't easy being 50 ... but why did I put up with mediocre vision for so long?

Well, it was easy. Whenever I got low on contacts - every couple of years - I'd swing by my old eye doctor's place. We'd talk about politics and religion for a couple of hours, and he'd send me out the door with a new prescription for the same old thing.

And it was cheap. Priests don't make much money, and if I can pinch a penny here or there, it's all good.

And it helped me to pretend that I was still 29 years old.

My eyes haven't changed at all - they're just using smaller print in books and magazines. Or maybe my arms aren't as long as they used to be. And, well, the windshield must not be as clean as it should be. I'll have to wash it better next time.

But I knew that I wasn't really seeing as clearly as I once was, but I was comfortable with it. It was cheap, and easy. And so long as I can pass the driver's exam ... who cares. Right?

Wrong.

In the Gospel, we hear Jesus say:

*If you were blind, you would have no sin;  
but now you are saying, 'We see,' so your sin remains.*

There's a saying ... attributed to Mark Twain that goes:

*Denial ain't just a river in Egypt.*

And whether or not he really said it, I think it's an apt paraphrase of what Jesus says in today's Gospel.

Why are we here? Maybe we're skipping on out watching the Michigan State game. But in all seriousness, if we aren't here to clear things up with God ... we very well might be living in a state of denial.

Sin is a three-letter word that we like to treat like a four-letter word. Even though at every Mass we "*acknowledge our sins*", we all too often revert right back to the same state we were before ... and miss out on God's saving grace.

We're blind ... but we're pretending ... that we see ... just fine.

Whatever your historical perception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation ... whatever childhood memories we have of dark rooms, deaf and shouting monsignors, and layers upon layers of "Catholic guilt" ... let's set that all aside, and take an honest look at who we really are ... and bring that reality into focus ... let us step out of the dim shadows ... and into the Light of Christ.

And as we approach this Sacrament today ... let us recognize it for what it really is: the Sacrament of Light ... the Sacrament of Renewal ... the Sacrament of Mercy.

Let us avail ourselves of the grace, love, and mercy of God ... freely offered in the Sacrament of Penance ... so that we might be transformed through an encounter with Jesus Christ ... our Light.