The Gospel of the man born blind is one of my favorites. The blind man who is healed is a man of faith. He believes in Jesus and is now able to see not just physically but also through the eyes of faith.

Ironically, the sighted in the Gospel are the ones who have the most difficulty seeing. The apostles believe the man was blind due to sin. The parents want to disavow knowledge of their child. The Pharisees find fault with Jesus for he healed on the Sabbath. It appears there is a pandemic of spiritual blindness.

The Gospel challenges us to do some soul searching and try to identify our own spiritual blindness. “Father of mercy, you led the man born blind to the kingdom of light through the gift of faith in your Son” (RCIA 2nd Scrutiny). Help us to see more clearly through the eyes of faith that we may understand our own blindness and humbly approach you for healing through the confession of our sins.

Let me return for a moment to the Pharisees. Some of them said, “This man is not from God, because he does not keep the sabbath.” In our social isolation, how are we to observe the sabbath? We are not able to gather in church. We are not able to receive Holy Communion. Life is turned upside down and inside out.

At Sacred Heart Cathedral this weekend, we are live streaming the Mass at 4:30 PM on Saturday, 11:00 AM on Sunday, 1:00 PM in Spanish, and 5:30 PM Sunday evening. Please go to the Diocese of Fairbanks website and click on the F for Facebook to see one of these Masses … if not when aired then later when you can.

In and around Nome, listeners can turn to KNOM AM 780, FM 96.1. Or perhaps you have access to a Mass on cable TV. With or without the help of radio or Facebook, it is still helpful to sit with the bible, to read and reflect, and to rest in the Lord. Take some time and meditate on this Gospel from the 9th chapter of John.

Although we are not able to receive Holy Communion directly, we are asked to make a spiritual communion. “A spiritual communion is a uniting of oneself to the Sacrifice of the Mass through prayer and can be made whether one is able to receive Communion or not” (CNS article). Pope Francis offers us this prayer:

“My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament of the altar. I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart … I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You,”

Express to Jesus in your own words, your longing to be reunited with him and to receive his precious Body and Blood in the Eucharist.

We can also look to our Blessed Mother Mary for ways of uniting our minds, our hearts and our souls with God. She listened to the Angel Gabriel as he laid out God’s plan for her that would most joyfully turn her world upside down and inside out. And she responded: “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done according to your word” (Luke 1:38).

Our sabbath … our day of resting in the Lord … of reading the word of God and inviting the Lord to grow within us will bear the most fruit if we are not afraid to listen to God’s invitation to unite our will with his. We pray for this when in the Our Father, we petition: “thy kingdom come, thy will be done.” To say this another way, let us turn again to the Blessed Mother. At the wedding feast of Cana, she said to the servers, “Do whatever he tells you” (John 2:5).

In these trying times when we may feel quite isolated from one another, let us remember that we are never farther than a prayer from our Lord. I would encourage you to take this time at home as a time to grow closer to God.

Saint Faustina’s Diary offers some very practical advice of how we can be more closely united with God. In paragraph 1572, Our Lord tells Faustina:

As often as you hear the clock strike the third hour, immerse yourself completely in My mercy, adoring and glorifying it; invoke its omnipotence for the whole world, and particularly for poor sinners; for at that moment mercy was opened wide for every soul. In this hour you
can obtain everything for yourself and for others for the asking; it was the hour of grace for the whole world – mercy triumphed over justice.

My daughter, try your best to make the Stations of the Cross in this hour, provided that your duties permit it; and if you are not able to make the Stations of the Cross, then at least step into the chapel for a moment and adore, in the Blessed Sacrament, My Heart, which is full of mercy; and should you be unable to step into the chapel, immerse yourself in prayer there where you happen to be, if only for a very brief instant.

Elsewhere Our Lord instructs “fear nothing. I am always with you, even if it seems to you that I am not. Your humility draws Me down from My lofty throne, and I unite Myself closely with you” (1109). Isn’t this amazing, we are invited to make a spiritual communion with God, and he wishes to do the same … uniting himself closely with us.

As the world deals with the pandemic of the coronavirus let us also acknowledge that the world also has a certain spiritual blindness. Let us believe in the Son of Man. “Listen to him” (Matt 17:5c). “Do whatever he tells you” (John 2: 5).