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When St. Augustine preached on this reading he noted the correspondence of the healing of the blind man to the sacrament of baptism. The man washes in the Pool of Siloam. He is able to see. In baptism we are washed in life giving waters. We who have received this cleansing can see because we have been given the supernatural virtues of faith, hope, and love. As a precursor to the washing Jesus takes clay and smears the clay on the man's eyes. Augustine argues that Jesus anointed the blind man before sending him to wash. That is the connection to the first reading. Samuel anoints David and David receives the spirit of the Lord.

Why do we anoint? It has been the longstanding tradition of the Church since Jesus sent out the disciples. They drove out demons and anointed many with oil (Mark 6:12). The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults says oil symbolizes the need for God's help and strength so that these catechumens will be undeterred by the bonds of their past and the opposition of the devil in order that they may hold fast to their faith and follow it unflinching for the rest of their lives.(no. 99). This exorcism followed by the anointing through the grace of the Church strengthens these our catechumens so that any sins they have committed in the past, they will shun and they will focus their journey on Christ. It also helps them in their resolve that they continue on their journey to baptism.

Recall that Lent has a twofold theme. We are probably most familiar with the theme of repentance. During Lent we also recall baptism. For the rest of us who are not catechumens that means reflecting on our baptism and renewing our baptismal promises made years ago (*Caeremoniale Episcoporum* 249). Do you reject sin so as to live in the freedom of God's children? Do you reject the glamor of evil, and refuse to be mastered by sin? We think about the creed as we affirm all the truths of the Church. If we believe all the things we say we believe will it be reflected in the rest of my evening, all the moments of the week, and indeed our entire life, or are we no different than those who are not Christian? Those

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anointings and the baptism that we received were to give us strength for the rest of our lives and we too are to be unfaltering in our faith, believing in Christ, his Church, and his sacraments.

This afternoon we pray for these our catechumens that they may be guided by God in their journey, but we too remember ourselves and pray that we who were anointed and baptized into Christ may lead that life that we promised to live by rejecting sin and following the light of Christ.