

Fourth Sunday of Lent - A
I Samuel 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a;
Ephesians 5:8-14;
John 9:1-41
Little Flower - 3/30/14

My Brothers and Sisters,

In today's Gospel, Jesus cures a man born blind. The primary theme of today's readings is sight. Today's readings suggest four levels of seeing.

The first level is physical sight. It is hard to imagine living in perpetual darkness. Jesus cured the man born blind, and he was able to see for the very first time. We can only imagine the man's first experience of sight and his excitement at being able to see. The first twelve chapters of St. John's Gospel are often referred to as the Gospel of Signs. Although all the miracles of Jesus are signs of his divinity, this miracle is an especially important sign. As the man born blind said to his interrogators, "*It is unheard of that anyone ever opened the eyes of a person born blind.*"

The second level is seeing with eyes of faith. Jesus not only gave him the gift of physical sight but also the gift of faith. After the man was expelled from the synagogue, Jesus found him and asked, "*Do you believe in the Son of Man?*" He answered and said, *'Who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?'* Jesus said to him, *'You have seen him and the one speaking with you is he.'* He said, *'I do believe, Lord,' and he worshiped him.*"

This passage contains an important insight into faith. Almost from the moment Jesus cured him, the formerly blind man had to defend Jesus and what Jesus had done for him. Several years ago, a young married woman whose in-laws were trying to convert her to their religion told me that being forced to defend her faith actually strengthened her faith. If our faith is not as strong as it should be, perhaps it is because we have not been put in the position of having to defend our faith.

The third level I would call insight. Here I am not talking about human insight but wisdom born of faith, i.e., seeing as God sees. In today's Gospel, the formerly blind man's answer to the Pharisees demonstrated insight or wisdom. A better example of the meaning of insight or wisdom can be found in today's first reading. God reminded Samuel, "*Not as man sees does God see, because man sees the appearance but the LORD looks into the heart.*"

The truth is we often judge by appearances. We look at how people look, how wealthy they are, where they live, what they do for a living, and even how other people see them. We often do not look at who they are as persons; we often do not look at their character. We can also say the same thing about ourselves. We often judge ourselves by the same superficial criteria. At times, we even let other people shape how we see ourselves. We also tend to be superficial in our judgments about what is going on around us and what is going on in the larger world. We often do not take the time or make the effort to try to see as God sees.

My brothers and sisters, there is also a fourth level of seeing in today's readings. St. Paul reminds the Ephesians, "*You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light, for light produces every kind of goodness and righteousness and truth.*" Because we have received the gift of faith, we are called to be light in the Lord, a light to the world. Christ is the one true light of the world, but we are called to reflect his light to the world by living distinctively Christian lives.