

4th Sunday of Lent - A
I Samuel 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a;;
Ephesians 5:8-14;
John 9:1,6-9,13-17,34-38
Little Flower - 3/19/23

My Brothers and Sisters,

All of the miracles of Jesus were signs of the coming of God's kingdom and signs of Jesus' divinity. The miracle in this week's Gospel, the cure of man born blind, and the miracle in next week's Gospel, the raising of Lazarus from the dead, were the strongest proofs of his divinity. As the formerly blind man said, "*it is unheard of that anyone ever opened the eyes of a person born blind.*" In other words, people who had lost their sight were sometimes cured of blindness. However, no one born blind was ever cured of blindness.

We can read today's Gospel on two different levels. The healing of the man born blind was certainly a physical miracle. However, it also has a deeper meaning. The miracle teaches us about spiritual blindness and spiritual sight. Spiritual blindness is when we are unable or unwilling to see with eyes of faith. Spiritual blindness also occurs when we reject what we see with eyes of faith. In today's Gospel, the blind man was led to faith in Jesus because Jesus gave him physical sight. However, because their eyes of faith were closed, the Pharisees were unable to see or accept that Jesus had healed the blind man and its significance.

Today we might ask ourselves if we suffer from spiritual blindness. Today many people are too busy or too distracted to see with eyes of faith. To see with eyes of faith, we need to allow some silence into our lives. Today many people are unwilling to see with eyes of faith when their ideas of faith or religion are challenged. For example, Pope Francis has become a lightning rod. Many people refuse to hear him when he speaks about abortion. Many other people refuse to hear him when he speaks about climate, the environment, or justice.

Today's first reading is about another kind of sight. In today's first reading, God sent Samuel to Jesse and his family to anoint a successor to King Saul. When the first son came before Samuel, Samuel thought he would be the one chosen by God, but neither he nor his next six brothers were chosen by God. Finally, when David, the youngest, came, God told Samuel he was the chosen one, and Samuel anointed him successor to King Saul.

When God rejected the oldest, he told Samuel, "*Not as man sees does God see, because man sees the appearance but the LORD looks into the heart.*" This is a powerful reminder that when we are judged, we will be judged not only by our actions but by what is in our heart. At the same time, it is also true that most of our actions, both good and bad, are more or less consistent with what is in our hearts, but not always.

God's words to Samuel also challenge us not to judge by appearances. We almost always judge by appearances. We make snap judgments about people based on how they look, how they talk, how they act, their education, and/or their job or career, especially if they are not like us. If our snap judgment is negative, we often make no attempt to get to know the real person or even to welcome the person among us. Racism, for example, is rooted in judging by appearances. Worse is when we judge people harshly based on their actions. God alone knows the secrets of our hearts. So much of what people do wrong, they do wrong not out of malice but weakness. I would suggest, then, that we all make a concerted effort to stop judging by appearances and to stop judging others at all.

My brothers and sisters, in his Letter to the Ephesians, Paul reminds the Ephesians that they were once in darkness but are now light in the Lord and, therefore, must live as children of the light. If we allow ourselves to see with eyes of faith, we become light in the Lord and will live as children of the light. Christ may be the one true light of the world, but he can only shine as brightly as we are willing to be Christian lights in the world today.