

Weekly Homily

22 March 2020 4th Sunday of Lent

READINGS:

First Reading	1 Samuel 16: 1, 6-7, 10-13
Psalm	Psalm 22
Second Reading	Ephesians 5: 8- 14
Gospel	John 9:1, 6- 9, 13- 17, 34- 38

REFLECTION:

Today is the Fourth Sunday in Lent. Traditionally, this day is known as *Laetare* Sunday, from the Latin word for the command “rejoice”. This is also Mothers’ Day when we give thanks to God for our mothers. It is the day to think of how much we owe to them for their care and love. So let us begin by thinking of all of God’s blessings to us: for giving us loving mothers, for giving us His love and forgiveness, and for sending us Jesus the Christ. Today’s readings both remind us that it is God who gives us proper vision in body as well as in soul and instruct us that we should be constantly on our guard against spiritual blindness.

By describing the anointing of David as the second king of Israel, the first reading, taken from the First Book of Samuel, illustrates how blind we are in our judgments and how much we need God’s help. In the second reading, Paul reminds the Ephesians of their new responsibility as children of light: “*You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of the light, for light produces every kind of goodness and righteousness and truth.*” Jesus’ giving of sight to a blind man, reported in today’s Gospel, teaches us the necessity of opening the eyes of our mind by Faith and warns us that those who assume they see the truth are often blind, while those who acknowledge their blindness are given clear vision. In this episode, the most unlikely person, namely the beggar born blind, receives the light of Faith in Jesus, while the religion-oriented, law-educated Pharisees remain spiritually blind. The well-known proverb is appropriate: ‘There is none so blind as those who will not see!’ Here, the phrase ‘those who will not’ means ‘those who do not wish to’ or ‘those who refuse to’. Unfortunately, many of us are spiritually blind without realising it. We need to learn that in recognising our personal sinfulness our spiritual blindness begins to be healed. Jesus brings healing from sin into our lives through his Church and the sacraments, especially the sacrament of reconciliation. When we celebrate this

sacrament with the proper disposition we meet the risen Lord who heals us and gives us life. Believing is seeing.

The healing described in today's Gospel occurred when Jesus came to Jerusalem with his Apostles to participate in the feast of Tabernacles or the festival of tents (*Sukkoth*). The healing of the blind man, told so dramatically in today's Gospel, brings out the mercy and kindness of Jesus, "the light of the world." Isaiah prophesied, and the Jewish people of that era believed, that when the Messiah came, he would heal blindness and other diseases. Jesus gave to the blind beggar not only his bodily eyesight but also the light of Faith. This story also shows how the stubborn pride and prejudice of the Pharisees prevented them from seeing in the humble "*Son of Man*" the long-expected Messiah, and that made them incapable of recognizing the miracle. He begins by identifying Jesus as "a man." Questioned further by the Pharisees, he declares that the man who healed him is a Prophet. When the parents of the blind man convinced them that their son had been born blind, the Pharisees argued that the healer was a "sinner," because the miracle had been performed on the Sabbath. But the cured man insisted that Jesus, his healer, must be a man from God. The blind man's progress in spiritual sight reminds us that we need God's grace and revelation to move toward sharper spiritual vision.

Spiritual blindness is very common in modern times. Such blindness refuses to see the truths of God's revelation. In their pride, the spiritually blind claim that everything ends with death and that there is no life after death. God's revelation through Christ informs us that there is a future life awaiting us in which our spiritual faculties and our transformed bodies will be fully and fittingly glorified. According to Pope Benedict XVI, the miracle of the healing of the blind man is a sign that Christ wants not only to give us sight, but also to open our interior vision, so that our Faith may become ever deeper and we may recognize Him as our only Saviour. He illuminates all that is dark in life and leads men and women to live as "children of the light" (Lenten message-2011).