

HOMILY FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT, YEAR A.



**1 SAMUEL 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a, PSALM 23:1-6,
EPHESIANS 5:8-14, JOHN 9:1-41.**

YOU WERE ONCE DARKNESS, BUT NOW YOU ARE LIGHT IN THE LORD.

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, the fourth Sunday of Lent is traditionally called “Laetare Sunday” or “Rejoice Sunday.” The Entrance Antiphon echoes this joy in these words drawn from the Prophet Isaiah, “Rejoice, Jerusalem, and all who love her. Be joyful. All who were in mourning; exult and be satisfied at her consoling breast” (Isaiah 66:10-11). The invitation to rejoice may seem to punctuate the penitential nature of Lent, but when properly understood, it further strengthens us to persevere in our Lenten observances, knowing that the joy of victory awaits us at the great celebration of Easter, which is coming soon.

The theme of light, which we find in the Gospel story of Jesus’ healing of the man born blind and, indeed, in the other readings, is another source of joy. Just like the healing of the blind man moved Him from total darkness to light, so has Christ, the light of the world (John 9:5), shone upon us, dispelling the darkness that dominated us and restoring us to the glory of the children of God. We were all created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:27). However, this image has been distorted by sin as stated by St. Paul (Romans 3:23). The presence of sin darkens our lives and throws us into spiritual blindness (that makes us see things as they appear not as they really are) a state that if we are not enlightened and redeemed by Christ will result in the loss of the beatific vision, of seeing God as He truly is and becoming like Him (1 John 3:2).

In today's first reading, we hear how God commissions the prophet Samuel to choose a successor to King Saul. He is sent to Jesse of Bethlehem to anoint one of his eight sons as the future King. Samuel is impressed by the eldest Son and presumes that this young man of great height will be God's choice. But no. The prophet learns: “God does not see as man sees; man looks at the appearances, but the Lord looks at the heart.”

Remember, like the prophet, we are all blinded by sin and thrown into spiritual darkness that only God can heal. It is only when we ask the Lord for the grace to see



and make right decisions that He enables us to do so. With the help of God, Samuel anointed David, who, humanly speaking, was not suitable. The Lord sees in David something more than meets the eye. And the young Shepherd boy is God's eccentric choice for the future King.

In today's Gospel, we have another example of God's choice, one which confuses the religious leaders of the day: a blind beggar who becomes a theologian! John's beautifully crafted story tells how a blind man comes to see the light in Jesus, both physically and spiritually. When Jesus' disciples first see the blind man, they presume that his affliction is a result of sin. But Jesus sees in the blind man something else: this roadside beggar who has always inhabited a world of darkness will be the one to display the work of God and point to who Jesus is, the true Light



. When Jesus healed the blind man, he returned home a new man. His surprised neighbors checked their memory, and some refused to believe their eyes. They are unwilling to let this new event interfere with their fast memories— despite the man's protest: "I am the man." He doesn't claim any special knowledge of the one who cured Him but identifies Him simply as "The man called Jesus." Unlike the healed man, the Pharisees are sure of who Jesus is. But as they grow more blind, the former blind man grows in sight and now identifies Jesus as the prophet. He refuses to deny His own experience: I only know I was blind, and now I can see. They drove him away,

but Jesus sought out this budding theologian and revealed Himself to him. Now the rejected man is the only one in the community who sees Jesus as the Son of Man.

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, just like the blind man was gradually led to his healing by Jesus, so has God delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of the Beloved Son (Colossians 1:13). In Baptism, we have all received the light of Christ and through the baptismal font received new birth and regeneration through water and the Holy Spirit. In this way, we become a new creation with the old things passing away. All things becoming new (2 Corinthians 5:17). In baptism, having received the Word, the true light that enlightens every man and woman, the person baptized becomes enlightened; he or she becomes a son or daughter of light, indeed; he or she becomes light himself or herself (CCC 1216). This

is the symbolism of receiving the baptismal candle, which announces the newly baptized not just as the child of God but also as the light of the world (Matthew 5:14).

Beloved friends, God has elected us to display His works. In our baptism, we have been chosen to point to Jesus by the witness of our Christian lives. To many people, including ourselves, we may seem an unlikely choice. But our greatness lies in the fact that we have been chosen, not in ourselves alone. Allowing God to work in us, we can keep alive the story of God's eccentric choices! To the newly elected for baptism at Easter Vigil, you will soon become the light of Christ to the world. It is expected that since Christ enlightens you, you must truly trust in God completely and find all your fulfillment in Him. You must have the confidence to say with the Psalmist that the Lord is my Shepherd; there is nothing I shall want (Psalm 23:1). You must never be afraid of the darkness of the world knowing that even if you should walk in the valley of the shadow of death, no evil will terrify you, for the Lord is with you to give you comfort (Psalm 23:4). For us who are baptized, and are now Christians, no amount of opposition, intimidation, threats or persecution should ever dissuade us from announcing the great deeds that the Lord has done for us.



May our lives be testimonies unto others, and may our light so shine before men and women, so that they may see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven (Matthew 5:16).

