

4th Sunday of Lent – Laetare Sunday (A): Christ our Shepherd Illuminates us and Heals our Blindness: 1 Sam 16:1, 6–13; Ps 23; Eph 5:8–14; Jn 9:1–41

A blind man was walking down the street with his guide dog. When they reached a busy intersection, the dog suddenly led him right into heavy traffic. Cars screeched, horns blared, and drivers slammed on their brakes to avoid hitting them. Somehow, they made it safely to the other side.

The blind man then reached into his pocket and offered the dog a cookie. A man who had witnessed the whole incident was shocked and said, “Why are you rewarding that dog? He almost got you killed!” The blind man replied, “I’m not rewarding him. I’m trying to find his head so I can kick his rear end!” It is humorous, but it reminds us of something very serious: **blindness can be dangerous when we are guided in the wrong direction.**

Today the Church celebrates the **Fourth Sunday of Lent**, traditionally called **Laetare Sunday**. The word *Laetare* means “**Rejoice.**” The liturgy begins with the words: “*Rejoice, Jerusalem! Be joyful, all who love her.*” (*Is 66:10*) In the middle of our Lenten journey, the Church invites us to pause, take courage, and rejoice. Why? Because **Christ our Shepherd comes to illuminate us and heal our blindness.**

In the **first reading**, God sends the prophet Samuel to the house of Jesse to anoint a new king for Israel. When Samuel sees Jesse’s older sons, he thinks surely one of them must be God’s chosen one. They look strong, impressive, and kingly. But God corrects Samuel and says, “**Not as man sees does God see. Man looks at appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.**”

Finally, the youngest son, **David**, who was only a simple shepherd boy, is brought before Samuel. God says, “Rise and anoint him; this is the one.” This reading teaches us a powerful lesson: **God does not judge by appearances. He looks at the heart.** Often in our world we make decisions based on external qualities—beauty, popularity, wealth, or influence. But God’s vision is deeper. He sees what truly matters inside a person. Sometimes our problem is that **we are spiritually blind**, unable to see as God sees.

In the **second reading**, St. Paul reminds the Ephesians of their past life before Christ. He says: “**Once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light.**” Without Christ, our lives can be filled with darkness—confusion, selfishness, and sin. But when Christ enters our lives, He brings light: goodness, truth, and righteousness. That is why Paul encourages us to live as people who belong to the light.

The **Gospel** presents the beautiful story of Jesus healing a man who was born blind. When the disciples saw the blind man, they asked Jesus a question that reflected the thinking of their time: “*Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?*”

In other words, they believed suffering must always be the punishment for sin. But Jesus rejects that idea. Instead, He says that through this situation **the works of God will be revealed**. Jesus then heals the man and tells him, **“Go wash in the pool of Siloam.”** The blind man obeys the instruction of Jesus. He goes, washes, and returns with his sight restored.

There are **two** beautiful lessons we can learn from this man. First, **he was obedient**. Even though he could not see, he trusted the word of Jesus and followed His instruction. Because of this obedience, he received healing. Second, **he remained faithful to the truth**. When the Pharisees interrogated him and tried to intimidate him, he did not deny Jesus. Instead, he courageously testified: **“One thing I do know: I was blind and now I see.”**

Even when they cast him out of the temple, he remained firm in his conviction. As St. John Chrysostom beautifully said: *“The Pharisees cast him out of the temple, but the Lord of the temple found him.”*

Ironically, the man who had been physically blind comes to see the truth, while the Pharisees—who could see physically—remain spiritually blind. Their pride prevented them from recognizing the work of God in Jesus.

My brothers and sisters, **spiritual blindness is more dangerous than physical blindness**. It happens when pride, prejudice, or sin prevents us from recognizing God’s presence in our lives.

That is why Jesus says He came into the world so that **the blind may see and those who think they see may become blind**.

Today’s Psalm reminds us: **“The Lord is my Shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.”** A shepherd guides his sheep, protects them, and leads them to safe pastures. **Jn 10:27-28** Jesus says, **“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life and they shall never perish.”** Jesus is that Shepherd for us. He guides us out of darkness and into the light.

As we continue our Lenten journey, the Lord invites us to allow Him to open our eyes—eyes that may be blinded by pride, selfishness, or indifference.

Laetare Sunday reminds us that **Christ is our light**. **Jn 8:12** Jesus declaring, **“I am the light of the world, whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”** He came into the world to illuminate our lives and heal our blindness. When we accept Him, our spiritual eyes are opened.

Then, with faith and confidence, we can truly say with the Psalmist: **“The Lord is my Shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.”** Amen