

Homily of Fourth Sunday of Lent Year A, 2023

1 Samuel 16:1-, 6-7, 10-13; Psalm 23:1-6; Ephesians 5:8-14; John 9:1-41

In the first reading, Samuel, in a way, was blind as to who God was going to choose to replace Saul as the king of Israel. God guided him until he anointed David. If not through God's guidance, Samuel would have made a wrong choice. The first reading teaches us a few lessons.

1. Appearance can be deceptive. Therefore, we must not make judgements and conclusions, hastily, based on appearance, initial impressions, and thoughts. Sometimes, there is more than meets the eye. Sometimes, what is on the surface is only the tip of the iceberg. We hear it often said, "All that glitters is not gold." It is important to spend quality time in discernment and prayer before decisions are made. It is important to listen attentively to God and follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit. However, spending quality time in discernment and prayer before decisions are made should not encourage prolonged indecision and procrastination.
2. Samuel did not depend on what was presented to him. He made inquiry: "Are these all the sons you have?" Jesse replied, 'There is still the youngest, but he is tending the sheep.' Samuel said to Jesse, 'Send for him; we will not sit down to eat until he arrives here.'" We must not be afraid or reluctant to ask valid questions which may help to a better understanding of the matter or help to unravel the truth. St. John advises, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). My dad, God rest his soul, used to tell me, "Son, do not call a mirage a river until you get to it."
3. Someone says, "Do not be discouraged. It is often the last key in the bunch that opens the lock." David was the last key in the bunch. If you try and fail, try, try, try again!
4. Jesse never imagined that the youngest of his sons could be considered for such an exalted position. Let us not underestimate what God can do in and through us or what God can do in and through someone else.
5. Samuel reminds us that our Omniscient God knows the heart of each one of us. We can deceive our fellow human beings, but we cannot deceive God. The Lord said to Samuel, "Not as man sees does God see, because man sees the appearance, but the Lord looks into the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways" (Isaiah 55:8-9).
6. No one can claim with certitude what is on another person's mind. Therefore, we must be careful to presume or claim to know what someone is thinking. One may end up with wrong and unfair judgements.

We pray for those who by the nature of their calling or responsibility must make judgements on others that they may be open to the wisdom and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. We pray, too, for all of us that we may seek to be guided by the Holy Spirit in our judgements.

In the gospel, we see the physical blind man who was healed by Jesus, recognized Jesus as a prophet and worshipped him; and the spiritual blind Jews who refused to see God's wonderful work in Jesus, and did not recognize that Jesus came from God.

The Jews ridiculed the man who was healed by Jesus and threw him out of the synagogue because he continued to insist that Jesus came from God. He was expelled from the synagogue because he was not afraid to speak the truth. How often do we see this happen around us? We see people who are not afraid to speak the truth ridiculed, suppressed, or eliminated.

While physical blindness is when a person is unable to see due to visual impairment, spiritual blindness is an impairment of the mind which causes a person to lose sight of right judgement and truth. We are blind when we do not recognize God's presence and his wonderful work. We are blind when we do not recognize God's goodness in others and in ourselves. We are blind when we do not recognize the hurts and damage we cause to others and to ourselves. Sin is like cataracts that blinds the eyes of our soul and heart.

In one way or another, all of us have some degree of spiritual blindness. All of us have our blind spots. In this fourth week of Lent, St. Paul encourages us in the second reading to "take no part in the fruitless works of darkness" but to receive the light of Christ. St. Paul writes, "Live as children of light, for light produces every kind of goodness and righteousness and truth."

Let us pray:

Jesus, the light of the world, heal our blindness as you healed the blind man in the gospel. Heal the rulers, leaders, and guides whose blindness has brought so much suffering in our society and in our world. Heal those who are in darkness and their journey and endeavor stagnated because their paths, corridors, and directions are blinded. May the testimonies of their deliverance, progress, and freshness glorify your holy name. Amen.

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