

Homily of Fourth Sunday of Lent Year A

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 by God's guidance, Samuel would have made a wrong choice. I believe that this passage teaches us a few lessons. (1) Appearance can be deceptive. Initial impressions and thoughts are not always right. We must not make judgements and conclusions with appearance, initial impressions, and thoughts. Sometimes, there is more than meets the eye. Sometimes, what we see is the tip of the iceberg. What is on the surface can be illusive. 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 his guidance. However, spending quality time in discernment and prayer before decisions are made does 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 or mesmerized or carried away to ask valid questions which may help us to a better understanding and help to unravel the truth. My dad used to tell me, "Do not call a mirage a river until you get to it." (3) Someone says, "Don't be discouraged. It's often the last key in the bunch that opens the lock." David was the last key in a bunch of eight keys that opened the lock. (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 through anyone or in the life of anyone. (5) Samuel reminds us that our Omniscient God knows what is in the heart of each one of us. We can deceive our fellow human beings but we cannot deceive God. (6) No one can claim with certitude what is a person's heart. Therefore, we must be careful to claim to know what people are thinking or what people are going to do. One may end up with wrong and unfair judgements.

We pray for those who by the nature of their call or work have to 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 cooperate with promptings of the Holy Spirit who directs us to the right way during our various valleys of decision.

In the Gospel we see the physical blind man healed by Jesus and spiritual blind Jews who refused to see God's wonderful work in Jesus, and do not recognize that Jesus came from God. The blind man who received his sight recognized Jesus as Lord and prophet, and worshipped him. The Jews, on the other hand, were unrepentant and did not believe in Jesus. They remained spiritually blind.

While physical blindness is when a person is unable to see due to the corruption of the eye by some disease or deformity, spiritual blindness is when a person, due the corruption of the mind, loses sight of the truth. The person is spiritually in darkness.

Sometimes, we are spiritually blind to right judgement and focus our attention on appearance alone as Samuel did. Sometimes, we are spiritually blind to the truth and wonderful work of God in others like the Jews. Sometimes we are spiritually blind to God's presence and new possibilities like the Jews.

In one way or another, all of us have some degree of spiritual blindness. In this fourth week of Lent, St. Paul encourages us in the second reading to wake up from blindness and darkness and receive the light of Christ. St. Paul tells encourages us to "Live as children of light, for light produces every kind of goodness and righteousness and truth."

We pray for all spiritually blind religious and civil rulers, leaders, and guides whose spiritual blindness has brought suffering and death to our world. May they be delivered from their blindness. Amen.

Jesus, you are the light of the world. We have gathered here and each of us is burdened by all kinds of blindness. Heal us as you healed the blind man in the Gospel. May your word come true in us, "Neither [us] nor [our] parents have sinned; it is so that the work of God might be made visible through [us]." Thank you Jesus because we believe that by your power, the work of God will be made visible through us and in us. Amen and Amen.

Fr. Martin Eke, MSP