

Fourth Sunday of Lent A - We are asked to see the world in a new way.

March 22, 2020

Samuel is just like us in this Sunday's first reading (Samuel 16:1-13)! His story begins with him grieving over the disobedience of Saul, over the loss of a great king to selfish interest and ultimately to madness. Just like us in our Lenten journey, Samuel reluctantly agreed to God's call to set aside being tied to the old ways and to set out in search of something new. But Samuel is called to seek a new king for Israel in the most unlikely places. Even when he began reviewing Jesse's children for the new king, he was confronted by a God who kept telling him again and again, "Not this one. Not this one" **Like all seekers, Samuel found himself being asked by God to look differently, to see the world in a new way.** The Gospel reading (John 9:1-41) is all about sight, both physical and spiritual. **A Man Born Blind Receives Sight** is at the centre of the story and whose restoration to sight reveals the blindness all around him, from his neighbours and family to the religious authorities and even Jesus' own disciples.

Kenny was the extrovert in the community for the disabled in the assisted living unit. He always plunked himself down right in the middle of where the action was: at the entrance to the dining room, or right in front of the TV in the sitting room. He knew everyone by name. "Good morning Ms Daisy. Your knees must be hurting you today again." "Hi, Henry. I think Linda was looking for you, and, my, but she was mad." "Hello Maxine, you got a letter today. Maybe it's from you grandkids." "Watch out, Charlie, someone spilled water there, and the floor might be slippery." Kenny was born blind. But he didn't miss a trick. He saw more with his blindness than most of us see with our two good eyes. He saw with his ears, and his gut, and his heart. Sometimes "blind" is not really blind and "seeing" is not really sight. All of us are born blind in one way or another in our life. Some of us have blindness of body: a crippling disease or bad bones. Some have a terrible blindness of heart which can't love another beyond a superficial level and usually can't even love themselves. The blindness of heart often live lives corroded with addictions to material things, possessions, and work, to cover up the empty hole. Worst of all is blindness of the soul, which wraps all the rest of life in gloomy darkness.

Remember during the crucifixion, Our Lord's side was pierced by a soldier while He was hanging on the Cross? According to legends, the soldier, a centurion, **Longinus, who was nearly blind, was healed when some of the blood and water from Jesus fell into his eyes.** He open his eyes and exclaimed *"Indeed, this was the Son of God!"* (Mark 15:39). Longinus who was blind, now see. He then converted, left the army, took instruction from the apostles and became a disciple, spreading the good news. Then he was arrested for his faith and was beheaded. Longinus' relics are now in the church of St Augustine, in Rome. His Lance is contained in one of the four pillars over the altar in the Basilica of St Peter's in Rome. St. Longinus's feast day is on my birthday day!

Jesus plays a lot with the concept of blindness. Remember **St Paul's** incident ? In the narrative of Acts, Paul was traveling on the **road from Jerusalem to Damascus** on a mission to "arrest them (Christians) and bring them back to Jerusalem" when the resurrected Jesus appeared to him in a great light he was struck blind, but after three days his sight was restored by Ananias of Damascus: who *"laid his hands on Saul and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored. Then he got up and was baptized."* (Acts 9:17:19). Paul began to preach that Jesus of Nazareth is the Jewish Messiah and the Son of God.

What kind of blindness lives inside us? Blindness is an opportunity for the works of God to be manifested and made visible. Our call in life, our reason for being, is to make Christ manifest. Jesus is the image, the exact reflection of God. We are called to become the image of Jesus. Blindness is a door to grace. It is the sick who need the doctor. It is the blind who need to see. It is we who need the redemption, the transfiguration, the Burning Light. This Sunday, our Lenten journey reaches a place where **we are called to acknowledge our own blindness and seek Jesus' healing touch.** But this kind of seeking is risky, because it has the possibility of turning our worlds upside-down. The man born blind in this Sunday's Gospel finds himself in unusual and unexpected places. Before, he was a beggar, scraping out a

living on the fringes of society. After encountering Christ, he becomes unrecognizable to his neighbours and finds himself witnessing the power of God - Jesus - in the court of the religious authorities. Has your world been turned upside-down and been challenged by Lent yet? As a Church, will we react the same as the Pharisees did to keep the status quo when the light of Christ touches our communities of faith? If we are to grow, not just in numbers but in spirit and dedication, **we must be prepared to see the world, the church, and each other with different eyes. We must not let our blindness close out the light of God's love from one another.**

And how would the world look if we allow Jesus to remove scales from our eyes and heal our blindness? We might hear God speaking through the voices of those who have been residing on the margins of our communities. We might find new ways of relating to God and each other - ways that we had never imagined before, and ways that might bring new life to our ministries, to our communities, and to the peoples around us. We might even think "outside the box" and see that God is greater than our ways of thought. We might even discover a Spirit that we thought we had lost, a Spirit that might bring us to new ways of witnessing to the power of the Christ's light for a people we thought we could never reach. So our Lenten journey is indeed confronted by a great challenge. Do we dare venture out like Samuel to find something new in the unlikeliest of places? Christ is, in fact, asking us to put aside our old ways of seeing and to see, instead, through the eyes of God. And what we will see and how we will see remains a mystery until we actually try - until we put our own blindness completely into the healing hands of the one who says, *"I am the light of the world."*

Let us pray for Jesus Eyes. Let us pray to see Jesus in each face we meet, each life we pass in this life. Let us pray to see God. Let us worship with our lives and make God manifest.