

FIRST READING 1 Sm 16:1, 6-7, 10-13

A reading from the first book of Samuel.

The Lord said to Samuel: "Fill your horn with oil and go. I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem, for I have chosen myself a king among his sons." When Samuel arrived, he caught sight of Eliab and thought, "Surely the Lord's anointed one stands there before him," but the Lord said to Samuel, "Take no notice of his appearance or his height for I have rejected him; God does not see as man sees; man looks at appearances but the Lord looks at the heart." Jesse presented his seven sons to Samuel, but Samuel said to Jesse, "The Lord has not chosen these." He then answered, "Are these all the sons you have?" He answered, "There is still one left, the youngest; he is out looking after the sheep." Then Samuel said to Jesse, "Send for him; we will not sit down to eat until he comes." Jesse had him sent for, a boy of fresh complexion, with fine eyes and pleasant bearing. The Lord said, "Come, anoint him, for this is the one." At this, Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him where he stood with his brothers; and the spirit of the Lord seized on David and stayed with him from that day on.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 22

Response:

**The Lord is my shepherd;
there is nothing I shall want.**

- The Lord is my shepherd;
there is nothing I shall want.
Fresh and green are the pastures
where he gives me repose.
Near restful waters he leads me,
to revive my drooping spirit. (R.)
- He guides me along the right path;
he is true to his name.
If I should walk in the valley of darkness
no evil would I fear.
You are there with your crook and your
staff;
with these you give me comfort. (R.)
- You have prepared a banquet for me
in the sight of my foes.
My head you have anointed with oil;
my cup is overflowing. (R.)
- Surely goodness and kindness shall
follow me
all the days of my life.
In the Lord's own house shall I dwell
for ever and ever. (R.)

SECOND READING Eph 5:8-14

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Ephesians.

You were darkness once, but now you are light in the Lord; be like children of light, for the effects of the light are seen in complete goodness and right living and truth. Try to discover what the Lord wants of you, having nothing to do with the futile works of darkness but exposing them by contrast. The things which are done in secret are things that people are ashamed even to speak of; but anything exposed by the light will be illuminated and anything illuminated turns into light. That is why it is said:

Wake up from your sleep,

rise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Glory to you, O Christ, you are the Word of God!

**I am the light of the world, says the Lord;
anyone who follows me will have the light of life.**

Glory to you, O Christ, you are the Word of God!

GOSPEL

Jn 9:1-41

(For shorter form read between ><)

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

>As Jesus went along, he saw a man who had been blind from birth.< His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, for him to have been born blind?" "Neither he nor his parents sinned," Jesus answered "he was born blind so that the works of God might be displayed in him.

"As long as the day lasts

I must carry out the work of the one who sent me;

the night will soon be here when no one can work.

As long as I am in the world

I am the light of the world."

Having said this, >he spat on the ground, made a paste with the spittle, put this over the eyes of the blind man, and said to him, "Go and wash in the Pool of Siloam (a name that means "sent"). So the blind man went off and washed himself, and came away with his sight restored. His neighbours and people who earlier had seen him begging said, "Isn't this the man who used to sit and beg?" Some said, "Yes, it is the same one." Others said, "No, he only looks like him." The man himself said, "I am the man."< So they said to him, "Then how do your eyes come to be open?" "The man called Jesus" he answered "made a paste, daubed my eyes with it and said to me, 'Go and wash at Siloam'; so I went, and when I washed I could see." They asked, "Where is he?" "I don't know" he answered.

>They brought the man who had been blind to the Pharisees. It had been a Sabbath day when Jesus made the paste and opened the man's eyes, so when the Pharisees asked him how he had come to see, he said, "He put a paste on my eyes, and I washed, and I can see." Then some of the Pharisees said, "This man cannot be from God: he does not keep the sabbath." Others said, "How could a sinner produce signs like this?" And there was disagreement among them. So they spoke to the blind man again, "What have you to say about him yourself, now that he has opened your eyes?" "He is a prophet" replied the man.< However, the Jews would not believe that the man had been blind and had gained his sight, without first sending for his parents and asking them, "Is this man really your son who you say was born blind? If so, how is it that he is now able to see?" His parents answered, "We know he is our son and we know he was born blind, but we don't know how it is that he can see now, or who opened his eyes. He is old enough: let him speak for himself." His parents spoke like this out of fear of the Jews, who had already agreed to expel from the synagogue anyone who should acknowledge Jesus as the Christ. This was

why his parents said, "He is old enough; ask him." So the Jews again sent for the man and said to him, "Give glory to God! For our part, we know that this man is a sinner." The man answered, "I don't know if he is a sinner; I only know that I was blind and now I can see." They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" He replied, "I have told you once and you wouldn't listen. Why do you want to hear it all again? Do you want to become his disciples too?" At this they hurled abuse at him: "You can be his disciple," they said "we are disciples of Moses: we know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this man, we don't know where he comes from." The man replied, "Now here is an astonishing thing! He has opened my eyes, and you don't know where he comes from! We know that God doesn't listen to sinners, but God does listen to men who are devout and do his will. Ever since the world began it is unheard of for anyone to open the eyes of a man who was born blind; if this man were not from God, he couldn't do a thing."> "Are you trying to teach us," they replied "and you a sinner through and through, since you were born!" And they drove him away. Jesus heard they had driven him away, and when he found him he said to him, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" "Sir," the man replied "tell me who he is so that I may believe in him." Jesus said, "You are looking at him; he is speaking to you." The man said, "Lord, I believe," and worshipped him.< Jesus said: "It is for judgement that I have come into this world, so that those without sight may see and those with sight turn blind." Hearing this, some Pharisees who were present said to him, "We are not blind, surely?" Jesus replied: "Blind? If you were, you would not be guilty, but since you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains."

>The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.<

PROFESSION OF FAITH

**I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
(all bow during the next two lines)
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the
Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge the living
and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting. Amen.**

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

We place before you with joy these offerings, which bring eternal remedy, O Lord, praying that we may both faithfully revere them and present them to you, as is fitting, for the salvation of all the world. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Sunday Message

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

THE WORD

Year A • 19 March 2023 • Colour: Violet or Rose • Psalter Week 4



Most of us are blessed with the gift of sight. We can see each other. We can see and treasure our loved ones. We can go to the movies and watch a film. We can feast our eyes on a beautiful sunset or observe our team's goal-scoring feats. The sharp-eyed amongst us will notice how nature is beginning to reawaken after its long winter sleep.

We can see, but there is a difference between being able to see and not seeing as we should. We can see but still not fully see at all. We can have 20/20 vision and still be blind.

Like the Pharisees in today's Gospel. They had the gift of sight, they could physically see, but they couldn't see what was really important. They couldn't see who Jesus really was. They couldn't see what was before their eyes. They suffered from spiritual blindness.

They are the polar opposites of the hero of today's Gospel – the man born blind. This poor man lived in a world of darkness but wasn't spiritually blind. When he encountered Jesus, when Jesus touched him, he could see who Jesus really was. He recognised Jesus as his Messiah and Lord.

So the man who was blind was the one who could see, whereas the Pharisees who could see were the ones who were blind. They didn't recognise Jesus. They refused to see him as their Messiah and Lord. They failed to see the light.

That's the beautiful irony of today's Gospel. And that's the challenge it offers us – to spot our blind spots and see where or how we might be blind. ■

PRAY

To say you are Christian today is to risk being ridiculed or dismissed as deluded. We can feel like we are on trial, just like the blind man must have felt in today's Gospel. Pray for yourself and Christians everywhere for the strength to witness to the faith, whatever the cost.

LEARN

A Christian is someone who leads others to Jesus

A Christian sees with the eyes of faith

Jesus is the light of the world

SAY

“Lord, I thank you for the gift of faith. Help me to see as you see. Amen.”

DO

Easter is drawing close, and now is an excellent time to make an examination of conscience. What are your blind spots? What do you need to change to be a better Christian?



REFLECT

Most of us can see, but we all have blind spots – faults, failings – we may not be aware of or to which we may deliberately turn a blind eye. Maybe there are family members or colleagues we ignore or are not attentive to. Perhaps it's how we see those who are different from us – people who are LGBT+ or of another race, nationality, or background. Maybe our relationship with God is not as it should be.

Perhaps we have got sucked into some form of addiction that we don't want to admit. Maybe we're stuck in a rut, just drifting along, not pulling our weight at home, work, or school. Perhaps we are so closed in on ourselves that we see only our needs, and we fail to see the needs of others. Maybe all those selfies that we take, and the modern obsession with image, mean that when we look in the mirror, we see only what we don't like about ourselves and fail to see the beauty in us and the extraordinary gifts and qualities that we possess.

There are so many forms of blindness and ways we can be blind.

Lent offers an opportunity to put this right. It is a time when we are invited to become aware of our blind spots, what we might need to improve or attend to. Look for your blind spots. Look at your life's shape now - your values, priorities, relationships, and attitudes. Ask the Lord to heal you, as he healed the man born blind. And then change what needs changing so you will have perfect 20/20 spiritual vision. ■