

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT YEAR A, (1Sam.16:6-7,1013, Ps.22, Eph.5:8-14, Jn.9:1-41)

THEME: JESUS, THE LIGHT THAT ENABLES US TO SEE

In the first reading of this Sunday God sent Samuel to the house of Jesse in Bethlehem to anoint one of his sons king in the person of David, in replacement of Saul whom God had rejected owing to his disobedience.

However, when Samuel went, he first caught sight of Eliab the eldest of the eight the sons of Jesse and Samuel thought to himself that, Eliab was the one God has chosen. But the Lord objected and said to Samuel not to take notice of his physical appearance or height, for God does not see and interprets as humans do. Man looks at the outer appearances but God looks at the heart and judges neither by human standards nor outward appearances.

This played out in God's choice of David whose adolescent appearance by human calculations would as yet give no evidence of his sterling leadership qualities which God sees. God sees something in David which Jesse his father and his brothers did not recognize -a man after God's own heart who delighted in doing what was pleasing to the Lord (1 Samuel 13:14). **In our own dealings with people, we should learn how to look into the heart of people and not only allow mere outward show or appearances to determine our decisions and conclusions about them.**

In complement to this fact, the Gospel reading today presents us with the striking story of a man who was born blind, a very rare situation. Probably this might have generated different opinions among the people. Perhaps the man is evil and have sinned gravely, some would say. For others, his parents might have been involved in some evil dealings. In the midst of all this confusions, the disciples of Jesus approached him to ascertain from him, what could actually be the cause of the man being born blind. "**Master**", they asked, "**why was this man born blind? Because of his own sins or those of his parents?.**" According to Old Testament thinking, human suffering is due to the sin of either the one who suffers or of one's parent. That is why they threw the question.

However, to their greatest surprise, Jesus' reply to their question was; **none of the above. Neither his own sins nor those of his parents caused his being born blind but that he was born blind so that God's work might be revealed in him.** Wow! Like the disciples, are we any different? Many of us today think that way.

We easily attribute any misfortune that befalls someone to be as a result of the person's sins or that of his/her family. We make judgments and conclusions about people's ugly conditions and situations that are beyond our explanations. The way we see and interpret events and other people's condition is never the way God sees and interprets them.

Jesus' reply today shows that, sin is not the cause of all sufferings as we often think and mistakenly interpret. Jesus himself has not committed any sin, yet he suffers grievously. Suffering is a fact of human life, and for the believer it can be an opportunity to allow God to work out his plan in our lives. At times God allows certain things to happen in order to achieve a purpose through it, like in the case of this man born blind.

Meanwhile, in his compassionate, Jesus made a paste of clay with spittle and rubbed it on the man's eyes and asked him to go and wash in the **Pool of Siloam**. The man did that, and his eyes were opened and he started seeing for the first time. However, this miracle produced negative reactions from some Jewish religious leaders - Pharisees. Instead of the miracle to elicit faith from them, it rather generated anger and hatred against Jesus. For them, **"This man (Jesus) is not from God, for he works on the Sabbath."** However, others wondered, **"How can a sinner perform such miraculous signs?"** So they were divided in their debate and they refused to believe in Jesus, thereby remained in darkness of their unbelief.

In response, Jesus tells them openly, that, ***He comes as the light into the world***, to overcome the darkness of error and sin. More importantly that, he came into this world to judge so that those who are blind would see and those who see would become blind. And since they (the Jewish religious leaders) claim to be seeing, their blindness remains. O Lord, free us from hidden fault and presumption.

On the other hand, the man whose eyes were opened believes in Jesus and becomes his disciple and this eventually led the Pharisees to expel him from his own Jewish community. Even today many believers in Jesus may be ostracized and persecuted by their 'blind' community.

If we wilfully close ourselves to Jesus, the light of the world, we will be left in perpetual spiritual darkness and unbelief. But if we open ourselves to his light of truth we will be led steadily to the heights of spiritual emancipation and inner happiness. Only then, would you give God the first place in your life and allow his principles to determine your decisions and life choices.