

## The Fourth Sunday of Lent "A" – Chapter 11

Lent is a pilgrimage of enlightenment. Primarily we want communion with and illumination from God. But we also need to be guided in our daily affairs and judgments towards people. We want God to shine in our hearts. During this week we focus on the second reading: "Awake, O, sleeper and rise from the dead and Christ will give you his light." (Ephesians 5:14).

The reason we have this Gospel about the man born blind is because blindness is a symbol of what plagues all of us. We all have blind spots and need greater clarity. We can be in denial when it comes to our inner issues. We can make false judgments of others. Our faith can be weak, and we doubt. This Gospel scrutinizes the elect, candidates, and all of us. Once we identify our areas in need of attention, we can come to a new vision.

The first reading (1 Samuel 16) identifies where one of our blind spots lies: towards people. Jesse had his seven sons pass before the prophet Samuel. They were good-looking and tall. Even the prophet Samuel was deceived, thinking: "Surely the Lord's anointed is one of these." He was wrong. We have all heard: "You cannot judge a book by its cover." God told him: "People look at the externals, but the Lord looks at the heart." (See 1 Samuel 16:17). Finally, David, the youngest, was brought in and he – the last, but not the least – was the one who was anointed. Certainly, his brothers would have never thought that David, who was out there with his "few sheep," would be the one God had chosen.

We have all had the experience of being judged unjustly. It may not be about the color of our skin, but it could be about the misinterpretation of our motives. It can hurt, especially when our reputation is on the line. We can think to ourselves: "They do not even know me." Jesus warned us about hasty judgments and taught: "Do not judge and you will not be judged. Do not condemn and you will not be condemned." (Luke 6:37). We all judge and assume we are right, but often we may need greater clarity.

Unfortunately, racism is still prevalent in the news. Whether it is the way people of color are being treated by some police, or by stances taken by politicians, or by words and attitudes, it exists. To judge another harshly solely by the color of his/her skin is a sin. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. had a dream that one day his children would be judged by the content of their character instead of by the color of their skin.

When we talk about blindness, the everyday judgments we make is a major area to look at. We are being scrutinized by these readings to do an inner examination. It is not just racial. James chided his community for giving deferential treatment to the rich while neglecting those in shabby clothing. (See James 2:2–3). Every day we meet people and face issues where our judgments are false. We must all make decisions. Who are the best politicians? What is the right stance regarding pro-life or pro-choice? Is climate change real? There are so many questions, issues, people, and judgments to make. The readings call us to recognize our blind spots and seek clarity and right judgment when it comes to people and issues.

The Catholic Church has always upheld the necessity of following your conscience. Our conscience is the inviolable part of our internal forum. But what many fail to realize is that it is an informed conscience that we must follow. We cannot just think in any old way or be influenced by others.

Many unknowingly let the daily news inform them, and let the news make up their minds accordingly. Can we really believe what we see on TV or read in the newspapers? That is up to you to decide. Be careful not to just listen to one side of the story – take in several opinions and make up your own mind. Otherwise, you risk having "the blind leading the blind." When it comes to making moral decisions, trust Church teaching. The (1)

Church has garnered a lot of wisdom in her two thousand year history. She will not lead her children astray. Her precepts can form our consciences well and can be relied upon. There can be times of thoughtful dissent, but overall, there is wise guidance from the two thousand year tradition of the Catholic Church.

## Site and Insight

Lent is meant to put us in touch with our baptism into Christ. In part 10, we spoke about the cleansing that needs to occur in our temples. Our baptism into Christ through water holds endless possibilities. Besides washing away our sins and immersing us in Christ, water brings a whole new reality. Water opens us up to a spiritual world and brings a whole new threshold of communication with God. Through water we learn a whole new supernatural language. This way of communicating is not so much with audible words as with an "inner knowing." You can call these insights, or new intuitions, or heightened awareness. One major way God contacts us is telepathically. The substance that water becomes is the passageway towards a new connection with God through spiritual communication.

God reveals himself to us through revelation. This disclosure can take the form of the Word of God, insights, impressions, and inner movements as well as dreams. God's communication to us can be grasped and understood.

One such verse confirming this in Scripture we all know so well, and is often misquoted is: "What eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him, God has revealed to us through the Spirit." (1 Corinthians 2:9–10). In other words, true wisdom is receiving from God what we cannot see or hear. The Spirit even shows us the future glories to come. For those who are in touch with God, there are no limits in the supernatural realm.

In many ways we are blind, deaf, and mute spiritually. We cannot talk fully about God because we have not communicated with God well. Once we start to hear and see anew (insight), our lips are loosened, and we can speak the praises and wisdom of God. As our vision towards God increases, so does our ability to speak about God.

Baptism washes away original sin, yes, but also re-creates us in Christ. We are new creatures in Jesus. God removes the heart of stone and gives us "natural hearts." (Ezekiel 36:26). The elect are heading toward the washing and regeneration of the font. Most of us have been baptized, but its delayed effects can be awakened and reawakened in fresh ways as we discover a new ability to know God.

The ancient Greeks saw the world as being made up of four elements. These elements were water, earth, air, and fire. Water is a common yet mysterious substance that brings about new life. Water has the ability to cleanse, heal, and satisfy. When submerged, every nook and cranny of our body is surrounded. This is a symbol of how we are immersed into Christ. Water is slippery and mysterious but life-giving. Even in Heaven, the "River of the water of life, bright as crystal will flow from the throne of God and of the Lamb." (Revelation 22:1). This living water will give life to all.

The season of Lent focuses on baptism. The elect journey toward the font to be immersed in Christ. We who have been baptized are awakened regarding the meaning of our baptism. In Christ, we find a new supernatural life. This life gives us "insight" and puts us in touch with a whole new way of communicating with God.

During the fourth Sunday of Lent the elect (and all of us) are scrutinized and prayed for. Here is the second scrutiny of Lent:

"Father of mercy, you led the man born blind to the kingdom of light through the gift of faith in your Son.

Free these elect from the false values that surround and blind them.

Set them firmly in your truth, children of the light forever.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Lord Jesus, you are the true light that enlightens the world.

Through your Spirit of truth free those who are enslaved by the father of lies.

Stir up the desire for good in these elect, whom you have chosen for your sacraments.

Let them rejoice in your light, that they may see, and, like the man born blind whose sight you restored, let them prove to be staunch and fearless witnesses to the faith, for you are Lord for ever and ever. Amen."

We need clarity of vision in many areas. It could be our conscience, our judgments toward others, our attitudes, and our spiritual perception of God. The readings invite us all to conversion and new in-sight. Baptism into Jesus brings to us a washing and a whole new language. Like the blind man, Jesus anoints us to see like never before. We have fresh new in-insight and are able to hear and speak like never before.

Lenten Lessons:

- We all have blind spots
- Baptism into Christ cleanses us from sin and saves us
- Immersion into Christ makes us a new creation
- Water awakens us to hear and see God in supernatural ways

Lenten Actions:

- Ask God for a communication breakthrough
- Examine your judgments toward others

