

Bible Study

Fourth Sunday of Lent, cycle A

Opening Prayer: (Sign of the Cross) “Lord our God, each year you give us this holy season of Lent in order that we might examine our lives and allow you to draw us into deeper union with yourself. Open our ears to hear your word, our hearts to receive it, and our lives to put it into practice. We ask this in the name of our Savior, Jesus the Christ, our Lord. Amen.”

Focusing Questions

1. Lent is half over. How are you doing with your Lenten disciplines?
2. If you had to give up 4 of your 5 senses, which one would you choose to keep? Why?

Commentary before the First Reading: 1 Samuel 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a

The story we are about to read took place approximately 1062 BC. God sent Samuel to the home of Jesse to anoint the person who would succeed Saul as king of the 12 tribes of Israel. Jesse proudly presented 7 strong, handsome young men to Samuel – and Samuel himself thought any of them would be suitable. However, one by one, God eliminated each one as a suitable candidate. God sees far more than the human eye can see.

Read the First Reading aloud.

1. How do you think Jesse felt after the seventh son was rejected as a candidate for king?
2. On what basis was David chosen to be the next king? (NOT his “splendid appearance!”)
3. How did God confirm that David was the correct choice?
4. David was born in Bethlehem. What other famous person was also born there? What is scripturally significant about this person being born in that same city?

Commentary before the Second Reading: Ephesians 5:8-14

Saint Paul taught that Christians ought to be as different from non-believers as light is from darkness. The symbol of Jesus as the Light of the World was so important in the early Church that the newly baptized were sometimes referred to as “the illumined.” This reading is full of baptismal imagery. It urges us to be live up to our baptismal calling, to be light! In fact, the final verse is from an ancient baptismal hymn.

Read the Second Reading aloud.

1. To which sacrament was Saint Paul referring in verse 14?
2. What is the difference between being in the light and being light? (see verses 8-9)
3. This reading lies after and before 2 passages in which St. Paul mentions the type of behavior that is not to be found among Christians. Look at verses 1-5 and verse 18. What do you see?
4. By contrast, then, how does a child of light live?

Commentary before the Gospel Reading: John 9:1-41

The readings for cycle A of Lent are noted for the three long and wonderful stories from Saint John’s Gospel that we hear on the 3 middle Sundays of Lent. This is the second one, important because of the rich symbolism of blindness and sight, of darkness and light, which laces it together. Basic to the story is an old superstition that all physical illness or defect was the result of sin.

Read the Gospel Reading out loud.

1. Which character(s) frustrates you most in this story?
2. Why, according to Jesus, was this man created without normal eyesight?
3. Which action of Jesus broke the laws of Sabbath?
4. There are many types of blindness in this story.
 - a. In what way are the disciples blind?
 - b. In what way are the Pharisees blind?
 - c. In what way are the blind man’s parents blind?
5. Explain in your own words the blind man’s reasoning for saying that Jesus must be a holy man?

Applying the Readings to our Daily Lives

1. The readings this week are about blindness and sight, seeing the apparent and seeing the truth. What sorts of non-physical blindness do you see in the world today?
2. Do you know of anyone whose illness or physical limitations have become a means of giving glory to God?
3. Discernment – deciding what is the correct thing to do or what is the truth – is a frequent task for Christians. In what kinds of situations do you find it difficult to know if something is the truth or if it is just an appearance of truth?
4. The blind man in the Gospel used a very effective way of answering challenges to his faith. Look closely at them and try to summarize his method.
5. Using that same method, how would you answer this challenge: “How can you believe that Jesus is God?”
6. Which is worse: being ignorant of Jesus or refusing to accept what has been taught about Him? Why?
7. What sort of blindness do you sometimes see in yourself? How could you work on that this week?

Closing Prayer:

Jesus, our Lord and Savior, you enlighten every believer through the grace of the Holy Spirit. Spread the clay of your word on our hearts and open our spiritual eyes so that we might see you at all times, in every situation. Fill us with the light of your gospel so that our thoughts and actions may be pleasing to you, and our love may be firmly based in you. Amen. (Sign of the Cross)