

4th Sunday of Lent A/2013 for RCIA

The readings of this fourth Sunday of Lent talk about the importance of light. They invite us to fully entrust ourselves to God so that we may see the things of the world with the eyes of God and judge them according to God's criteria and not human appearances.

The first reading of the book of Samuel talks about the choice of David as a king of Israel. It shows that, contrary to the judgment of Jesse his father and the prophet Samuel, David was chosen to be king among his brothers, in spite of his young age. Then, Samuel anointed him as God had recommended him to do.

What is behind this text is the idea that God's ways are not human ways nor are his judgments human judgments. Another idea is the truth that, while humans focus on the external appearance, God looks at the heart. That is why in his consideration, he gives preference to the innocent, the poor, the sick and the rejected.

This text allows us to understand what is at stake in today's Gospel as Jesus heals the man born blind. The Gospel starts with a discussion between Jesus and his disciples about the responsibility for being born blind. For Jesus, the fact of being born blind cannot be attributed to anybody, because God can transform anything for his glory.

Then, the Gospel describes how Jesus came to heal the blind man by smearing the clay mingled with his saliva on his eyes. When he went to the pool and washed at the command of Jesus, his eyes opened and he started seeing.

Even though the parents of the blind man declined to assume full responsibility for what happened to him and the Pharisees doubted that he was born blind, he persisted in bearing witness in favor of Jesus, his healer. In the end, the meeting of Jesus and the blind man gave him an opportunity to acknowledge Jesus and worship him as his savior.

What do we learn from this Gospel? From this Gospel, a lot of things can be said, for instance, about the mystery of life and sickness, the so-called connection between sin and suffering, the conception of time in God's perspective, the importance of witness when facing adversity, etc. But, given that this Sunday we celebrate the scrutiny of the catechumens, I will limit my say to two points related to the value of the sacraments.

The first point I want to bring is about the power of God as mediated through human matter. In fact, in the Baltimore Catechism there was a question that asked: "What are some of the perfections of God?" On the list of responses, one said that God was almighty. What it meant by it is that God has power.

It is that power we see at work in the beginning of creation when God says, "May the light be", and there was light. But, in today's Gospel, that power to make things exist or be transformed is mediated through material elements. In fact, in the process of the healing of the blind man, Jesus mixes his saliva with the clay and anoints the eyes of the blind with the recommendation to go and wash his face. After having washed, the blind man could really see.

As it appears, the healing power of Jesus is mediated through these material elements. It is Jesus who heals, but he mediates the healing through the use of human things like soil, saliva and water. That is exactly what we do in the celebration of the sacraments of

the Church. That is why the healing of the blind man reminds us that God heals us through the sacraments we receive within the Church. In that perspective, each sacrament is, in its own way, a manifestation of God's power through which he touches us in order to spiritually heal us, forgive us, feed us, strengthen us, etc.

The second thing I want to highlight is about the importance of light. In fact, we live in a culture wherein our life is made easy with the use of electricity. Because of electricity, we are at all times in light and never in darkness, except when there is a blackout.

When there is a blackout, indeed, we realize how important the light is. In such a moment, the things we usually take for granted like cooking, listening to the radio, watching the television, using the computer, become problematic. But imagine the drama of a man who has spent the whole of his life in darkness. He does not even know what the light looks like. He cannot distinguish the faces of people or the color of things. The only world he knows is that of voice and touch.

Imagine now that the man is given the possibility to see. What a great change is brought into his life! His whole world is completely changed upside down because he can now put a face on all these voices he heard before and the touches he felt before. That is what Jesus has come to do, namely to make a difference in the life of people, to change their world by making it a new reality. That is why, by giving the sight to the born-blind, Jesus presents himself as the light of the world without which those living in darkness will never see.

However, the physical healing alone is not enough. We also need our soul to be cleansed and the sins to be forgiven, which Jesus also has come to bring to us. That is why we have to understand that, even if we might not be physically ill, we need the spiritual healing. The physical healing has to do with the body and the spiritual healing with the soul. That is what the Pharisees did not know and understand. They considered themselves as healthy people, and yet they were not. Jesus reminds them that, in spite of their open eyes, they are just blind persons, because they live in sin and have no intention of repenting.

That spiritual healing, so needed for our soul, is brought to us through the sacraments of the Church. Each sacrament, in a very particular way, heals and restores our soul to health. In order to let that healing be operative in us through the sacrament, we need faith. Only faith can bring us the healing of the soul. So, once the blind man was physically healed and his human existence illuminated, his interior life was given a new understanding. Then can he say: "I do believe, Lord".

Let us pray, then, that Jesus may heal not only our physical sickness, but also our spiritual, so that we may see with his light what we cannot see with human eyes. May God bless you all!

1 Samuel 16: 1b, 6-7, 10-13a; Ephesians 5: 8-14; John 9: 1-41



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Contact: www.mbala.org

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