

## Fourth Sunday of Lent A/2017

The readings of this fourth Sunday of Lent talk about God's judgment. They show that God judges according to the divine prerogatives that look above all at the heart of the person, while human beings judge by referring to the external look and appearances. They invite us to enter God's vision in order to understand his judgments.

The first reading tells the story of the anointing of David as the king of Israel. It shows how, contrary to Samuel's thought, none of Jesse's older sons was chosen by God for the throne of Israel. It also shows the surprising choice of David who was the youngest and the least experienced among his brothers. Finally, the text describes the anointing of David and his being filled with the spirit of God.

What is behind this text is the idea that God's ways are different from that of humans. Another idea is that, while human beings judge by looking at the external circumstances and physical appearances, God looks at the human heart. The last idea is related to the truth that God has a preference for the humble, the weak and the poor.

This text allows us to understand the stakes of today's Gospel as it describes the healing of the man born blind. First of all, the Gospel starts with a curious conversation between Jesus and his disciples about the responsibility for being born blind, whether it comes from the sin of the man himself or that of his parents.

Then, it gives the answer of Jesus who declares that it was the fault of none of them, but rather so that the work of God might be made visible through him. After that the Gospel describes the healing itself, how it happened through the smearing of the eyes of the blind man with clay and his washing in the Pool of Siloam.

The second part of the Gospel describes the encounter of the healed man with his neighbors, the Pharisees and his parents. It shows the controversy that followed and the doubt of the Pharisees that he was born blind. It equally shows the excuse of his parents, as well as the bad faith of Pharisees who treat Jesus as a sinner.

The last part of the Gospel describes the ultimate encounter of Jesus with the healed man. It shows in particular how he recognized Jesus as the Messiah and believed in him. Finally, the Gospel describes the Pharisees' reaction to the whole speech of Jesus and his response that they were blind because they remained in their sins.

What do we learn from this Gospel? Today I want to talk about the limits of human judgment. In fact, we easily pass judgment on people, things and situations. Most of the time, we judge by referring to the circumstances, to the way things appear to us and to the thought we have about them. Globally, it can be said that we judge according to our feelings and established criteria and ideas, be they bad or good.

When we do so, we certainly limit ourselves to external circumstances and appearances. However, there are a lot of things we do not know about people and the motivation that pushes them to act in one way or another. In the same way, we do not know all the facts about things we judge only according to external circumstances. In that perspective, our judgment can be only partial. In other words, God alone is the one whose judgment is impartial because he sees what is hidden in the human heart.

That truth is evident in the story of Samuel who was mistaken by thinking that the older sons of Jesse were fit to be king, while God did not choose them. In the same way, the disciples were wrong in thinking that someone might have sinned so that man might be born blind.

In fact, what was in the mind of the disciples was a popular belief and pre-established idea, defended even today by some people, namely that disease and misfortune are a consequence of sin. For Jesus, that cannot be true, because every situation in which someone is involved, be it of joy or sadness, is an opportunity for God to manifest his glory.

In that sense, what is important is not the cause of our sickness, but what God can do in order to heal us. In truth, God heals us in many ways, including through human medicine. Another way God heals us is through the sacraments of the Church. In that perspective, each sacrament is, in its own way, a manifestation of God's grace through which he shows us his forgiveness in order to spiritually heal us.

In the process of healing in today's Gospel, Jesus mixes his saliva with the clay and anoints the eyes of the blind by telling him to go and wash his face. That points to the sacrament of baptism with its use of water and the anointing with the holy oil?

In this regard, the challenge we face is that of accepting Jesus' healing power. In today's Gospel, the Pharisees did not do so. Even when they had evident proof because of the healing of the man born blind, they still treated Jesus as a fake prophet. That is why Jesus said that, though they had eyes to see, they remained in their blindness. In the same way, the parents of the man born blind were afraid to acknowledge publicly the healing of their son as coming from Jesus.

This period of Lent is a time of witnessing to the truth of Jesus as our savior and our Light in the middle of the darkness of this world. This is exactly what the healed man has done and what Jesus wants of us. That is clearly expressed in the Gospel by the fact that Jesus appears only at the beginning and the end of the story. He does so in order to let the faith of the blind man grow among the difficulties and hardships of life.

In fact, what Jesus wants of us is that we grow in our faith and give witness to him amid the conflicts and hardships of life. Let us pray for courage to bear witness to Jesus. Let us take advantage of Lent to become true disciples of Jesus. 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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