

## HOMILY FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Jehovah's Witnesses are great at house to house evangelism. There is a man who used to frequently go to a neighborhood. He was blind. He usually began by raising up his red-edged Bible and shouting, "I was blind but now I see." This way he would attract a group of curious people around him and begin witnessing to them. If you needed a distinction between physical and spiritual blindness, this is it. Physically he was blind, but spiritually he was clear sighted, or at least so he believed.

The first reading (1 Sam. 16:1.6-7.10-13) tells that God does not judge us based on our physical appearances as men do, but that He judges our hearts. The heart here refers to the inner chamber of a person where one interacts with God. This was the lesson Samuel learnt when God asked him to anoint David as King instead of his elder brothers who had better physical qualities. The Good News is that God is not interested in our outward appearances but in our internal disposition towards Him. If our disposition is good, He might also improve on our physical appearances.

We can understand this better in the gospel reading (John 9:1-41). When Jesus together with his disciples met the man born blind, while his disciples looked at his blindness as a consequence of his sins or those of his parents, Jesus looked straight into the man's heart and saw him as a potential witness to the Good News. That was why he went ahead to mix spittle with clay, anoint the blind man's eyes and asked him to wash in the pool of Siloam. As a result of this, the blind man began to see and all who saw him were astonished. The story of this blind man symbolizes the destiny of man. But unlike the man born physically blind, we became spiritually blind as a result of the sin of our first parents, Adam and Eve and also that the work of God might be made manifest in us. Like the blind man, we all have the opportunity of encountering Christ on the way to be healed of our spiritual blindness.

The meeting of Jesus with this blind man symbolizes the encounter with God which the incarnation of Christ made possible. The anointing of clay mixed with spittle symbolizes a personal encounter with Christ who chooses to encounter us differently in various ways. This could be through reading of the Scriptures, participating in the liturgy or joining in a fellowship. The presence of Christ's spittle in the clay got from the ground symbolizes the divine presence in those activities we may

see as ordinary, such as reading the Bible or going for a sacramental confession. The pool of Siloam which means “sent”, symbolizes the Church which is sent to represent Christ in the world. The washing in the pool symbolizes a participation in the sacraments of the Church of which baptism is of paramount importance. The faith of the blind man symbolizes the faith of all who have truly encountered Christ on a personal level. The reaction of the Pharisees and the Jews symbolizes the attitude of those who see the light of faith and yet refuse to follow it on account of their stubbornness and unbelief.

Since we all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, we have all gone spiritually blind. Within this period of Lent, God invites us to wash ourselves in this pool of Siloam by actively participating in the Lenten observance. Do you participate in the Stations of the Cross or fast or give alms? Through a sincere practice of prayer, fasting and alms-giving, we may be healed of this spiritual blindness which is sin. As the second reading (Eph. 5:8-14) advises us, it is time to wake from sleep by searching out what pleases the Lord and by taking no part in the works of darkness. Therefore beloved friends, let us rejoice that Christ has located us and has given us a solution to our problem. Let us then do our part to see that we walk as the children of light who will resurrect with Christ at Easter.