

4th Sunday of Lent Readings (Year A). 1Sam 16:1b, 6-7,10-13a, Eph 5:8-14 & Jn 9:1-41
Theme: “Not as man sees does God see, because man sees the appearance but the Lord looks into the heart.”

In the Western Christian liturgical calendar, the 4th Sunday of Lent is called Laetare Sunday. Laetare is a Latin word meaning “rejoice.” As you may notice, we are halfway through the Lenten Season so we are preparing to rejoice with our Lord Jesus Christ on Easter Sunday when he won victory over sin and death and gave meaning to our Christian faith, namely, the resurrection from dead and his ascension into heaven.

Today is also the Second Scrutiny for our catechumens who, God willing, will be received into the Church through the Sacraments of Initiation on the Easter Vigil. Please, continue to keep them, their families, teachers, and godparents in your prayers. Since we were not able to celebrate the First Scrutiny rite last weekend, we’ll present them with the Creed today after the homily.

As I mentioned in my homily last weekend, the readings of Lent have a baptismal character that prepare us for the renewal of our baptismal commitments to God and, for the catechumens, for their reception into the Church. For instance, in the first reading, we hear of the anointing of David as a king of Israel. Through baptism, we also share in Christ’s Kingship, priestly, and prophetic missions. St. Paul reminds us through baptism, Jesus has redeemed us from darkness (sin) into the light (salvation). We must continue to walk in the light of Jesus Christ, the true Light of the World. Lent should wake us up and make us aware of what we must be as Christians. St Paul says it all well: “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.” Then, in the Gospel, John also reminds us that Jesus is the Light of the World that gives sight to the physically blind but also the light of faith to the spiritually blind.

The theme I picked for this 4th Sunday is “NOT AS MAN (WOMAN) SEES DOES GOD SEE, BECAUSE MAN (WOMAN) SEES THE APPEARANCE BUT THE LORD LOOKS INTO THE HEART.” This theme reminds me of the saying that “appearances can be deceiving.” Human beings look at outward appearances but our God, who knows us all, looks at the heart, the center of our life. Since we have limited perception of reality, one of the biggest mistakes we make is judging people by outward appearances.

The first reading today taken from the First Book of Samuel and gives us the account of the anointing of David as the King of Israel. After God rejected King Saul, he made David succeed him as the second king of the new nation created out of the twelve tribes of Israel. When Samuel saw Eliab, one of the seven sons of Jesse, Samuel who was looking at his outward appearance and thought he was the right one to succeed Saul as the King of Israel. God then said to Samuel and to all of us: “DO NOT JUDGE FROM HIS APPEARANCE OR FROM HIS LOFTY STATURE, BECAUSE I HAVE REJECTED HIM. NOT AS MAN SEES DOES GOD SEE, BECAUSE MAN SEES THE APPEARANCE BUT THE LORD LOOKS INTO THE HEART.”

How many of us judge from an outward appearance of a person? For example, some folks do this during dating, in marriage, or in picking who should be their friend, etc. Unfortunately, many of these situations do not end well because your judgment/choice is based on an outward appearance and not from the heart, the depth of a person. We forget this idiom: “all that glitters is not gold.”

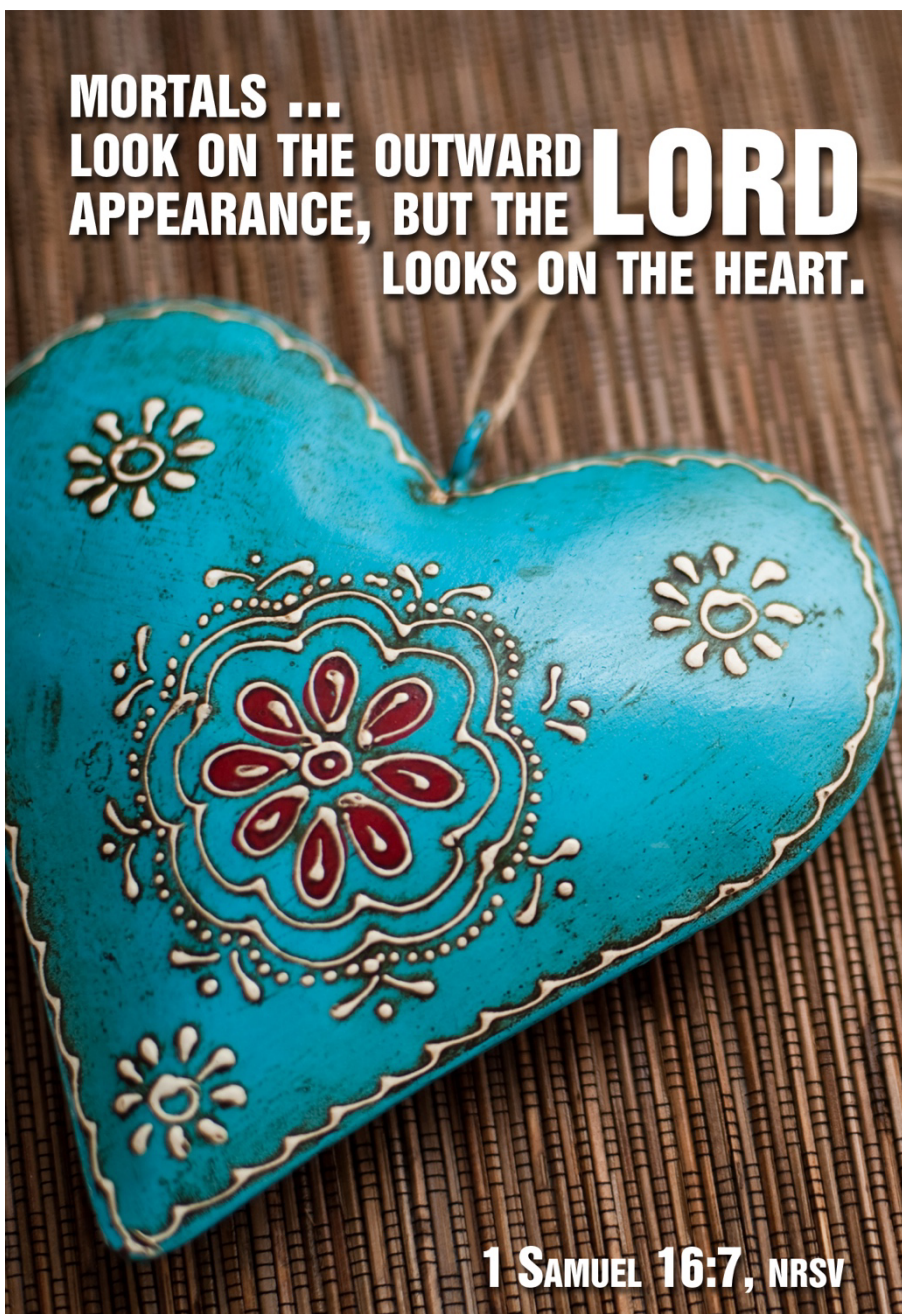
In the Gospel reading, Jesus restored a sight to a man born blind. To understand the question Jesus’ disciples posed to him: “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” I’ll give a brief background of their question. During Jesus’ time and even today, some people considered sickness and suffering as punishments from God. Jesus disagreed with that. In this passage, he mentions one of the possible reasons for sickness and suffering, namely, that God’s works may shine forth in the sick man. It is true that human suffering continues to be a mystery for us today also. I will recommend that we try to see God in everything good/bad that happens to us. We can learn a lot from every situation that comes to us if do not judge from outward appearances but look at the depth of it from our faith in God.

For example, instead of asking why God allows this to happen to me, rather, ask God to help you to know what he is saying to you with regard to what you're going through.

We can all learn from this man born blind that Jesus healed. I admire him for standing on his ground and making a profound profession of faith in Jesus as a prophet. No one could stop him from the denying the truth of his experience of Christ as a prophet of God. He went on to become the disciple of Jesus. Our catechumens and all of us must learn from this blind man to stand for Jesus and his Good News and never allow anyone to stop us from doing what is right in the sight of Jesus.

As we all know well that having a good sight is a blessing, very important to each and every one of us. But it has been said that "the greatest tragedy is not to be born blind but to have eyes and yet fail to see."

Fr. Flor McCarthy, SDB, a Salesian priest in his book "New Sunday and Holy Day Liturgies" listed many forms of blindness that I find very interesting for us all to reflect on especially since this gospel of the 4th Sunday of Lent talks about that. Here are the different forms of blindness Fr. McCarthy mentions in his book:



Selfishness blinds us to the need of others.

Insensitivity blinds us to the hurt we're causing to others.

Snobbery blinds us to the equal dignity of others.

Pride blinds us to our own faults.

Prejudice blinds us to the truth.

Hurry blinds us to the beauty of the world around.

Materialism blinds us to spiritual values.

Superficiality blinds us to a person's true worth and causes us to judge by appearances.

Let us all turn to our Holy Mother Mary and her beloved husband, St. Joseph, to intercede their Son, Jesus Christ, to give us the eyes of faith to see him in one another.