

**First Reading: 1 Sam 16, 1. 6-7.10-13****Second Reading: Eph 5,8-14****Gospel: Jn 9,1-45**

## **OVERCOMING THE BLINDESS IN OUR LIVES**

As we Christians move closer to Easter, we need to have our eyes wide open to really see the great event and all that it means to us today here in Zambia. On Good Friday, we need to see exactly why Jesus dies, who it is who kills him and how he greatly suffers for us. We need to see beneath the bloody events to the reality of what is taking place. And on Easter Sunday, we also need to see the power of the event of the Resurrection of Jesus, the marvel of life conquering death, of love overcoming hatred.

Yes, indeed, you and I need clear eyes to see the full meaning of the wonderful events of what we call the "Paschal Mystery," the life, death and resurrection of Jesus! That's why the readings of this Fourth Sunday of Lent are real helps for us, because they emphasise a contrast between sight and blindness, between keeping our eyes open to God's ways and closing our eyes to how God is present around us.

Every time we have elections in Zambia, we have candidates from the different political parties coming before us trying to persuade us to give them our votes. They tell us how good they are, they offer us so many promises, and they might even sweeten their campaigns with some gifts of chitenge and chibuku! But do we really see these candidates for what they truly are? Do we know them at the deeper level?

Are we like Samuel in the first reading today? He thinks he knows who God wants to be the King of Israel because he judges from the outside appearances of the different sons of Jesse. But Samuel has to be reminded that God does not see as humans sees. Humans look at appearances, but God looks at the heart! And so should we, when we examine different candidates, we should look at the heart of the woman or man asking for our votes. Are they good and intelligent, honest and trustworthy, hard-working and dedicated? We really need good eyes and clear sight to make the right political judgments when we cast our votes!

And then St. Paul tells us in the second reading today that we should be "children of the light," really striving to see what it is that God wants us to do. We know that when it is dark in our house (maybe ZESCO has turned off the power again!), we light a candle in order to find our way without bumping into things! But in the ways of our Christian life, the effects of the light of Christ are seen in "complete goodness and right living and truth." You and I want to know what God is calling us to do – in our home life, in work places and business, in school, in our small Christian communities and churches, and in our beloved country of Zambia.

According to St. Paul, we should try to discover what the Lord wants of us by really letting the light of Christ shine on us. And where do we find that light of Christ? In the Scriptures, in the readings we hear at Mass each Sunday and in the passages that we pray over during the week. We want to be children of the light.

But the best lessons about having clear vision and seeing what we want to see is found in John's Gospel today in the beautiful story of the man born blind. Those of us who are not blind can never really appreciate fully what it means not to be able to see the people and the events around us. The blind person cannot see the face of the person who talks to them, can never know what their children look like, cannot be warned ahead of time if they are walking into a dangerous place. Their whole world is dim and dark. Truly, blindness is a very sad situation.

In the dramatic story in John's Gospel, we see three actors: 1) Jesus who has compassion on the blind person, 2) the man born blind who wants to see, and 3) the Pharisees who are blind because they refuse to see the loving power of Jesus.

Jesus tells us elsewhere that he has come so that people might have life and have life to the full. And surely part of a full life is full sight, open eyes, clear vision. So Jesus is immediately touched

when he meets the man who has been blind since birth. He doesn't bother with the question of his disciples as to whether the man is blind because of some sin. He doesn't worry about doing some work on the Sabbath. And he doesn't pay any attention to the critical opinions of the Pharisees. Jesus sees someone in need and he takes immediate action to help that person.

Do you and I have the same sense of urgent compassion when we see someone in need? Maybe someone in my family, or a friend in my neighbourhood or small Christian community, or a person I meet begging on the street? Do I have the eyes of Jesus when I see someone in need?

The man born blind is someone who really wants to see. And that's why he cooperates with Jesus, carefully following his instructions. And when he has gained new sight, he is not afraid to proclaim that Jesus is the one who enabled him to see. Even when strongly challenged by the Pharisees, he courageously sticks to his story and tells the whole truth. Indeed, it turns out that his new sight is not only *physical* but is also *spiritual*. Now the man born blind sees with the eyes of faith that Jesus, who cured him, is truly the Lord, the Son of God.

Do you and I have this same burning desire to see Jesus, to look for him in the Scriptures, in the liturgy and sacraments of our church, in our neighbours around us?

Finally in the Gospel story, we have the Pharisees, those people who claim to be holy, who think that they alone really see the truth, but who are blind as blind can be! Faced with evidence of Jesus' cure and the testimony of the man born blind, they simply refuse to see. Indeed, they are the ones who really are blind even while claiming to see. Why don't they see? Because they are afraid that if they admitted to seeing the power of Jesus who cured the blind man, then they would have to admit that Jesus is truly the promised Messiah. And that would have serious consequences in the lives, their practice of religion, their place in society. Better to turn a blind eye than to face such a challenge!

And what about you and me, do we sometimes close our eyes and pretend to be blind rather than keep our eyes open to the truths and challenges around us? As we draw close to Easter, let's be thankful for our sight and let's help others to truly see!

#### **QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING IN SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES**

- Do I have the same sense of urgency as Jesus when I see someone in need?
- Do I have the same burning desire to see Jesus, to look for him in the Scriptures, in the liturgy and sacraments of the church, in my neighbours?
- Do I sometimes close my eyes and pretend to be blind rather than keep my eyes open to the truths and challenges around me?

#### **SKETCH**

Have someone act as a mother who has a daughter working in the bar. There is an opportunity for the girl to work at a nursery school but for less pay. The mother knows that working in a bar exposes her child to prostitution and careless beer drinking but she ignores these dangers. Then one day she sees her daughter come back home often drunk. She sees this sad situation and realises the dangers her daughter faces. She immediately finds a safer job for her daughter at a nursery school.

#### **COMMUNITY PRAYERS**

- Lord, we pray that we open our eyes to see the needs of others around us and respond with urgent compassion, *Lord, hear our prayer! Lord graciously hear us!*
- Lord, we pray for the spirit to be witnesses to the Gospel values especially in a society blind to many injustices. *Lord, hear our prayer! Lord graciously hear us!*
- Lord, we pray that our Zambian political leaders, when they are making policies, may keep in their minds and hearts the families struggling to live decent lives; *Lord hear our prayer! Lord graciously hear us.*