

Sunday, March 26, 2017

4th Sunday of Lent

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading: 1 Samuel 16:1, 6-7, 10-13

2nd Reading: Ephesians 5:8-14

Responsorial: Psalm 23:1-6

Gospel: John 9:1-41

Encountering Jesus and Responding to His Healing Love

Do you believe in the Son of Man? (John 9:35)

Like last Sunday's Gospel reading about the woman at the well, this story about the blind man contains four distinct elements: a person is touched by Jesus; the person accepts Jesus; the person witnesses about Jesus; and other people react to the person's witness.

The experiences of the blind man and the woman are especially similar when we look at the first three points. Both the woman and the blind man encounter Jesus and are healed by him. She was healed from her past sins, and he from physical blindness. Both came to believe that Jesus is the Messiah. And both began to witness about him.

The main difference in these two stories lies in the way that the other people responded. The people of Samaria were moved by the woman's witness and came to believe in Jesus. But many of the people surrounding the blind man closed their hearts and rejected him.

Both stories tell us that Jesus wants to enliven our faith. Although we can't touch Jesus physically, we can still experience his presence. Jesus is always reaching out to us. Each day, he is with us, urging us to look to him for help and inspiration. What's more, his Holy Spirit is in us, convincing us that we are God's beloved children (Romans 8:16).

Without Jesus' healing, it's unlikely that the woman at the well or the blind man would ever have changed. She was stuck in a fruitless search for love and belonging. He was trapped in the indifference of the people around him. But Jesus lifted them out of their prisons and set them on a new path.

We are all stuck in one way or another. Sometimes it's because of our poor decisions, and sometimes it's just part of living. But regardless of how you got stuck, Jesus is still reaching out to you. So let him put his arms around you today and lift you up.

"Jesus, you are with me. I trust in you."

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Questions for Reflection or Discussion:

1. In the first reading, the Lord speaks these words to Samuel, as he tries to discern which of Jesse's sons the Lord has chosen to be anointed as the future king of Israel: "Not as man sees does God see, because man sees the appearance but the LORD looks into the heart."
 - What do you think these words mean and what impact do you think these words had on Samuel's decision to anoint David, the youngest of Jesse's sons?
 - In what ways do these words apply to us?
 - What specific steps can you to adopt a more godly perspective in judging others?
2. The responsorial psalm, Psalm 23, begins with these very familiar words: "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want." It continues with these uplifting words: "In verdant pastures he gives me repose; beside restful waters he leads me; he refreshes my soul."
 - What do you think the psalmist meant when he said "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want"?
 - What do the words: "he refreshes my soul" mean to you?
 - Have there been times in your life when you have actually experienced the Lord's refreshment? How?
3. The second reading from the letter to the Ephesians opens with these powerful words: "Brothers and sisters: You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light, for light produces every kind of goodness and righteousness and truth."
 - What is St. Paul trying to describe in contrasting the Ephesians' previous condition of darkness with their current condition of "light in the Lord"? How do these words apply to us?
4. The second reading goes on to advise the Ephesians to "Take no part in the fruitless works of darkness; rather expose them, for it is shameful even to mention the things done by them in secret; but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for everything that becomes visible is light."
 - What do you think these words mean?
 - The best place to expose the "fruitless works of darkness" so that "Christ will give you light" is in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Why is this so?
5. In the Gospel reading, the man healed of blindness goes from saying, "The man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes" to saying, "He is a prophet" and then, "If this man were not from God, he would not be able to do anything" to finally, "I do believe, Lord," and then "he worshiped him."
 - In what way is the Gospel story, in addition to being a story of a miraculous healing of a blind man, also a story of conversion to Christ, including the healing of his spiritual blindness?
 - How does this story of the blind man apply to your journey of conversion and encountering Christ?
6. The meditation begins with these words: "Like last Sunday's Gospel reading about the woman at the well, this story about the blind man contains four distinct elements: a person is touched by Jesus; the person accepts Jesus; the person witnesses about Jesus; and other people react to the person's witness."
 - Why do you think the Samaritans, who were outcasts of Israel, accepted the woman's testimony about Jesus while the Pharisees, who were learned and spiritual leaders of Israel, refused to believe the blind man's testimony about Jesus' healing and who he was?
 - We may not be physically blind, but we all face a certain degree of spiritual blindness because of our fallen nature. What areas of spiritual blindness do you want Jesus to heal so that you can "see" more clearly in those areas?
7. Take some time now to ask the Lord to enliven your faith and trust in him and to continue his healing of any spiritual blindness you may have. Use the prayer from the end of the meditation as a starting point.

"Jesus, you are with me. I trust in you."

[The discussion questions were created by Maurice Blumberg, who is in partner relations for **The Word Among Us Partners**, (<http://www.waupartners.org/>); a ministry of **The Word Among Us** (www.wau.org) to the military, prisoners, women with crisis pregnancies or who have had abortions, and college students. He is also

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