



He smeared the clay on [the man's] eyes, and said to him, "Go wash in the Pool of Siloam." (Gospel)

Deacon Steve Szmuto's Reflection on the Sunday Readings

March 22, 2020 – Fourth Sunday of Lent

1 Samuel 16: 1b, 6-7, 10-13 Psalm 23: 1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6

Ephesians 5: 8-14 John 9: 1-41

As I write these words, all of us are experiencing a “new normal” in terms of how we work, how we and our children learn, how we socialize, and even how we worship. The restrictions placed upon us because of the Coronavirus have impacted every aspect of our lives. In some respects, it is as if we are traveling through a dark tunnel, looking for the light, and hoping it is not an oncoming train. As we seek to maintain a sense of normalcy in a unique time, we seek the light. Although public Masses are cancelled at this time, we are called to adopt an attitude of prayer and reflection. As many have access to the Sunday liturgical readings, I hope that these continued reflections will enable you to meditate more deeply as you pray in uncertain times.

The phrase, “I see the light!” is often shouted when we gain sudden insight, when we see clearly that which had been obscure. We are “enlightened” when we discover new information that helps us to know things in a deeper or more profound way. The term is also used to describe luminosity or radiance – the often-ethereal brilliance of elusive sensibility.

Light, as a symbol of Christ, is one of the recurring themes in the New Testament and the sacred liturgies and rites. In the Rite of Baptism, a burning candle is given to the parents and godparents of the child to be baptized as the priest or deacon proclaims: *“This child of yours has been enlightened by Christ. He (she) is to walk always as a child of the light.”*

In today's readings, the symbol of light occurs both in the second reading and the Gospel passage. In his Letter to the Ephesians, Saint Paul reminded the brother 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.”* There is the direct contrast between the darkness of evil and the light of those things pleasing to Christ. Darkness is death; light is life.

In the reading from the Gospel of John, the fifth sign or miracle – the man born blind – focuses not merely light and darkness in the physical sense, but rather as Christ's teaching on faith in him as the source of spiritual illumination. Jesus said, *“While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”* Upon encountering the blind man, Jesus cured him, giving him his sight. And yet, in response to the miraculous cure, the Pharisees, ignoring their own senses, sought to discredit Jesus' powers as not from God, simply because he healed the man on the Sabbath. So focused were they on the time of the cure, that they missed the greater sign. The man formerly blind saw both spiritually and physically with the eyes of faith; he was enlightened by his faith in Christ who cured him. In response to the persistent accusation of Jesus' sinfulness by the Pharisees, he simply replied, *“If he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know is that I was blind and now I see.”* The man's blindness was cured so that all might see; the Pharisees' refusal to acknowledge the sign was clear evidence of their spiritual blindness. They continued to walk in spiritual darkness, despite the compelling evidence of Jesus' identity.

Do we walk in darkness? Do we turn from the light of faith, which shines before us, because we are convinced that only we possess truth? Do we look at Jesus and see only a teacher, only a healer, or even merely a prophet? Or do we see Jesus as the Christ, the only-begotten Son of God. Only by embracing Jesus Christ, Lord and Savior, in the fullness of both his divinity *and* humanity, are we cured of our own spiritual blindness! Only by turning our lives over to him do we walk in the glow of eternal salvation. *“I am the light of the world, says the Lord; whoever follows me will have the light of life.”* In good time and in challenging times, Christ is our light and our life. Let us turn to him and be comforted in him.

Deacon Steven Szmuto