



March 19, 2023
Fourth Sunday of Lent

*"If you were blind you would have no sin; but now you say,
'We see,' so your sin remains." John 9:41*



Dear Friends,

Not too long ago, I saw an article that caught my eye, *"Why the Ancient Greeks Couldn't see the Color Blue."* In short, it's not that the ancient Greeks could not see blue they just did not have a specific word to describe it. Homer in the ancient Greek poem *The Iliad*, describes the seas around Greece as "wine dark." In ancient Greek just as in ancient Chinese, Hebrew, or Sanskrit there is no word for blue. It appears that there is an evolution in words for colors.

The first colors to be named were black/dark and white/light. The next color to be named was red. Then yellow and orange. Next came green. Blue was categorized as a shade of green. Finally blue came to be seen as a separate hue. Humans can see millions of hues, but we only have a limited number of names. And different cultures have different ways of seeing and categorizing them. For example, in Japanese they see dark blue and light blue as different, and so they have two different names.

Today's readings remind us that we do not always see things the way that God sees them. This is why we need the revelations of the prophets. In our reading from the First Book of Samuel, God sends the prophet to anoint the one whom God chooses to be the new King of Israel. Following his cultural norms, Samuel thinks it will be the oldest son of Jesse. But God says "no." So Jesse brings forward all his sons and God rejects them all. Finally, Jesse sends for the youngest who is out with the flocks of sheep. When David arrives, God tells Samuel to anoint him. Samuel did not expect this. God does not see as humans see.

Prophet Jesus came to tell us what God is like. In his preaching and teaching, Jesus reveals the mercy of God. In our reading from the Gospel of John we are told the story of Jesus healing the man born blind. Jesus is expanding the understanding of the Law. For him the Law points us in the direction of love. The Law is not an end. The opponents of Jesus cannot see beyond legalism. They have determined that physical ailments are the result of sin. So, the blind man is seen as an outcast. It is black or white, either or.

Jesus violates the Law by healing on the Sabbath. His rivals then label him a sinner. They are blind to what Jesus is doing. The purpose of the Sabbath laws of rest are for the restoration and re-creation of God's people. What better way to restore the blind man than healing him on the Sabbath. Jesus reveals that what God is doing is to show mercy and healing. The blindness of the man is not a sin but an opportunity. While the blind man can see what Jesus is prophetically doing, the legalists are blind to it. They do not see as God does.

Lately there have been several U.S. Catholic bishops who have been establishing transgender negative policies. These policies are formed without talking to transgender people, their families, psychologists, physicians, and scientists. They say they have clear moral vision to determine how transgender children and adults should be treated by parishes, Catholic Schools, and pastoral ministers. And these are not merciful policies.

It seems to me that humans are evolving new words to speak about human sexuality. It is not that gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender people did not exist before our time. Now we are developing a vocabulary so we can speak more articulately. Like colors we do not only see black and white but now many different hues. With these new understandings of human sexuality, we must, like Jesus, see everyone through the eyes of mercy.

Peace,

Fr Ron

Esta carta está en español en el sitio web: www.anne.church