



March 10, 2024

Fourth Sunday of Lent (Cycle A)

"If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you are saying, 'We see,' so your sin remains." John 9:38



Dear Friends;

Ecological theologian, Thomas Berry asks us, *"What do you see when you look up at the sky at night at the blazing stars against the midnight heavens? What do you see when the dawn breaks over the eastern horizon? What are your thoughts...in the autumn when the leaves turn brown and are blown away...or when you look out over the ocean in the evening? What do you see?"* Berry points out that earlier peoples saw in *"natural phenomena a world beyond ephemeral appearance, an abiding world, a world imaged forth in the wonders of the sun and clouds by day and the stars and planets by night, a world that enfolded the human in some profound manner. This other world was guardian, teacher, healer—the source from which humans were born, nourished, protected, guided, and the destiny to which we return..."*

Berry points out that we have become blind to this deeper reality. *"Consequently, we now find ourselves on a devastated continent where nothing is holy, nothing is sacred. We no longer have a world of inherent value, no world of wonder, no untouched, unspoiled, unused world. We think we have understood everything. But we have not. We have used everything."* In other words, are we going to consume ourselves to death? Berry, Pope Francis, and others call us to open our eyes to looming the ecological catastrophe. Blinded by economic ideology many refuse to see the plight of our planet.

Our readings today remind us that, even with physical sight, we can be blind. In the first reading from 1 Samuel, God tells the Prophet Samuel, do not judge by appearances *"Not as [hu]man sees does God see, because [hu]man sees the appearance, but the Lord looks into the heart."* We need to admit that sometimes our vision is flawed or limited. We must discern with others a broader vision for the common good for all living things.

In our passage from John's Gospel, Jesus deals with ideological blindness of the Pharisees. Their minds are made up and their hearts closed. Walking along Jesus sees a man who was born blind. The disciples ask him, *"Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"* Many people at the time of Jesus thought that illness or congenital problems were the result of sin. That any sickness is punishment from God.

Jesus rejects that idea. Jesus sees it as an opportunity to demonstrate the love and compassion of God. Jesus is the prophet of God's love. His acts of healing and forgiveness reveal the kingdom of God's loving care. The Pharisees are blind to the message of Jesus. Jesus heals the man on the Sabbath. The Pharisees have determined that healing is not permitted on the Sabbath. Jesus violates the rules, so Jesus is a sinner.

Jesus sees the Sabbath rest as the time to be renewed and recreated by God's grace. So, what better time than the Sabbath to heal? They do not see the marvel of a man who has never been able to see now having sight. They are blinded by ideology. Ironically the blind man sees Jesus as the human face of God. Pope Francis likes to remind us, *"People are more important than ideologies."* Our ideologies blind us. Let us pray that God remove the blindness that prevents us from showing compassion for all life on the planet.

Peace,

Fr Ron

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