

LIGHT IN THE LORD
By Al Mansfield
FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

1 Samuel 16:1,6-7,10-13
Psalm 23
Ephesians 5:8-14
John 9:1-41

LIGHT IN THE LORD

Just as *water* was the theme that flowed through the readings last Sunday, so today, the theme of *light* shines forth in the liturgy. St. Paul tells us that we are "light in the Lord" and Jesus proclaims that he is the "light of the world" as he heals the man who was born blind.

1 SAMUEL

Saul had been anointed as the first king of Israel but his actions displeased the Lord. The Lord removed his favor from Saul and sent the prophet Samuel looking for someone else to anoint as king. In today's first reading, the Lord sends Samuel to Jesse of Bethlehem to seek another king from among Jesse's sons.

After seven of Jesse's sons were presented to Samuel, he said, "The Lord has not chosen any one of these." Finally, David, the youngest son, who was tending the sheep, was brought in. The Lord commands Samuel to anoint him as king - the first of three kingly anointings that David would eventually receive. We are told that, "from that day on, the spirit of the Lord rushed upon David."

Today's Responsorial is Psalm 23, perhaps the most well known of all the psalms traditionally attributed to David: "The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want."

GOSPEL

The gospel reading today from John 9 is quite lengthy, although shorter options may be used. It is the account of Jesus healing the man born blind.

In this gospel, we see a stark contrast between light and darkness, between sight and blindness. Only Jesus could heal the man who was blind since birth. This is symbolic of Jesus healing all of us who were "born blind," that is to say, born in original sin. As Jesus tells the man to wash in order to cure his blindness, so we are commanded to be "washed" in baptism in order that our spiritual blindness may be removed.

Another interesting contrast occurs in the conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees. Today's narrative concludes with Jesus' statement: "I came into this world for judgment, so that those who do not see might see, and those who do see might become blind."

By refusing the light of God, the grace of the Holy Spirit, those who can physically see become blind; those who accept the light of the Holy Spirit, though they are physically blind, can see clearly!

EPHESIANS

Our second reading speaks about the theme of "light in the Lord." St. Paul acknowledges that we were once in the darkness of sin, but urges us to live now as "children of the light."

Light equals goodness, righteousness and truth. Darkness equals "fruitless works...shameful even to mention...".

The reading concludes with a reference to Christ our light - a chant sung at the Easter Vigil when the Paschal Candle is solemnly brought into church.

LAETARE AND LIGHT

Today, the Fourth Sunday of Lent is Laetare (Rejoice) Sunday. It marks that point in Lent when we sense that we are approaching our Easter goal.

So, even in the midst of our Lenten observances, we can rejoice and be glad as we celebrate the Light of the World shining upon us. May we always be "light in the Lord" and "children of the light." Praise God that "the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it" (cf. John 1:5.)