

Read



1 Samuel 16:1b, 6-7,
10-13a

Psalms 23:1-3a, 3b 4, 5, 6

Ephesians 5:8-14

John 9:1-41 or 9:1, 6-9,
13-17, 34-38

LIVING THE WORD

Fourth Sunday of Lent

March 22, 2020



REFLECTION

In today's world it is easy to paint Jesus as just a "nice guy" or a good teacher. That puts him comfortably in a place where we can ignore him. However, Jesus claims in today's Gospel that he is the light of the world, and he strongly condemns the actions of the Pharisees (who were regarded as holy leaders) as sinful. Such claims were a punishable offense for Jews. Jesus was not just a "nice guy"! C. S. Lewis wrote in *Mere Christianity* that Jesus had to be one of three things: a complete lunatic, a demonic liar, or who he claimed to be—the Lord himself. We cannot simply regard him as a nice person and shove him aside. Do I take Jesus' words seriously? Do I truly believe that he is God and that he is taking care of everything? Do I trust him with my life and live as if he is the light of the world?



ACTION

Light is necessary for sight. Without light we are lost in darkness. Light from a fire or the sun is also associated with warmth and thriving. In the second reading St. Paul encourages the early Christians to live as children of light. What does that mean? Using this allegory, make a list of all the ways that we can live in the light of Christ. Examples are brightening someone's day with sincere compliments, avoiding gossip or other activities of "darkness," and looking for ways to ease your parents' burden by looking for ways to help care for your home.

"Darkness can only be scattered by light. Hatred can only be conquered by love."



—St. Pope John Paul II

QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ What are activities that "children of light" would do, and how can I bring those activities into my daily life more?
- ❖ What are actions of darkness—the opposite of light—and where do I need to make changes to keep myself free from those activities?



March 22, 2020

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

LECTIONARY #31A

1 Samuel 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a

Psalm 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6

Ephesians 5:8-14

John 9:1-41 or 9:1, 6-9, 13-17, 34-38

Prepare for the Word

The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.

Leader's Context

When Jesus healed the man blind from birth, clamor and tumult followed. We learn that not only does Jesus have the authority to heal others in God's name, but that those who were witness to such miracle could not identify Jesus' great holiness due to their own spiritual blindness. During Lent we examine and work to remedy our own spiritual blindness.

Q FOCUS: *Discover spiritual blindness and ask God to give sight.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

Instruct the young people to find today's date on the liturgical calendar. Note the time remaining in Lent and also note the Annunciation of the Lord on Wednesday, March 25. If there is time, pray a decade or even a single prayer from the Rosary meditating on the Mystery of the Annunciation.

Church Teaching Connection

"[Sin] is a blindness of the spirit, which prevents us from seeing what is most important, from fixing our gaze on the love that gives us life. This blindness leads us little by little to dwell on what is superficial, until we are indifferent to others and to what is good" (Pope Francis, homily, March 5, 2016).

Hear the Word

Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.

Gospel Acclamation

Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.

Glory to you, O Word of God, Lord Jesus Christ!

Gospel

John 9:1, 6-9, 13-17, 34-38

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

All make the Sign of the Cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.

As Jesus passed by he saw a man blind from birth. He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva, and smeared the clay on his eyes, and said to him, "Go wash in the Pool of Siloam"—which means Sent—. So he went and washed, and came back able to see.

His neighbors and those who had seen him earlier as a beggar said, "Isn't this the one who used to sit and beg?" Some said, "It is," but others said, "No, he just looks like him." He said, "I am."

They brought the one who was once blind to the Pharisees. Now Jesus had made clay and opened his eyes on a sabbath. So then the Pharisees also asked him how he was able to see. He said to them, "He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and now I can see." So some of the Pharisees said, "This man

is not from God, because he does not keep the sabbath." But others said, "How can a sinful man do such signs?" And there was a division among them. So they said to the blind man again, "What do you have to say about him, since he opened your eyes?" He said, "He is a prophet."

They answered and said to him, "You were born totally in sin, and are you trying to teach us?" Then they threw him out.

When Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, he found him and said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" He answered and said, "Who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?" Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he." He said, "I do believe, Lord," and he worshiped him.

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Everyone may be seated.

Reflect on the Word

When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:

The story of the man born blind is one that has layers of meaning. First we meet the man born blind. In his time people would have believed that he was born blind because of his own sins or those of his parents. In those days too, a blind man would have likely been very poor, and unable to work. A spouse and children, which was of utmost importance to the Jewish people, would have been impossible for this man as he wouldn't have been able to support them. In Jesus' time, such a disability was socially unsurmountable. The man was a beggar who depended on other's charity in order to eat.

When he met Jesus, it was a Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath. On the Sabbath, no work was ever done because the Jewish people followed the Ten Commandments closely. In the story, Jesus spit in the dirt to make mud and smeared it on the man's eyes. Jesus told him to wash in the pool of Siloam,

and the man was healed of his blindness. When his neighbors brought him to the Pharisees, argument occurred as to whether or not Jesus was of God. When the man himself claimed Jesus was a prophet, the Pharisees threw him out, saying the man shouldn't be trying to teach them. Later, the man worshiped Jesus knowing he was the Son of Man.

What calamity surrounded this healing Gospel story! In the layers of the story we see first Jesus' power over human illness. Jesus, as he does in so many stories, brings wholeness to the man born blind. Jesus' healing changed the man's life ultimately—besides being able to function in an ancient society not easily navigated by the disabled, the man made the spiritual step of knowing the identity of Jesus, and worshiped him. The Pharisees, who were considered to be holy, learned people, were not able to see the identity of Jesus. As he does in many places in the Bible, Jesus made the last to be first.

This story highlights spiritual blindness, something that was prevalent in Jesus' time and prevalent now.

► **Have you ever met someone who preaches kindness but is perhaps quite cruel to others?**

Maybe someone in your life is somewhat two-faced, talking about honesty and truthfulness while cheating on school tests. While these examples may not describe you in particular, we all have our faults, shortcomings and sins, and we all have spiritual blindness. We are all in need of forgiveness. Spiritual blindness is the inability to see or perceive one's own spiritual shortcomings. Lent is a time the Church wisely gives us—it is a time we commit ourselves to uncovering our own spiritual blindness so that Jesus can heal our sins and shortcomings in life. All of us have such shortcomings, and during Lent we have the opportunity to thoughtfully examine our faults and sins, and work toward a living a better life through Jesus Christ. Every Lent throughout your life you have a wonderful opportunity to grow in your relationship with God by addressing your own areas of spiritual blindness.

Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the "Church Teaching Connection" on page 158.

Consider spiritual blindness. What is a spiritual blindness that you have grown past? What is one you think you need to consider in prayer?

How are you progressing in your Lenten discipline? Do you need any support in what you have chosen to do?

With about two weeks remaining in Lent, do you have any spiritual practices you'd like to complete, such as Reconciliation, spending time in service to your community or spending time in before the tabernacle?

Act on the Word

Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina is an ancient form of prayer, meditation and encountering Scripture. The Latin phrase *Lectio Divina* means holy reading, and this form of prayer was used in the early centuries of the Church. Teach the young people this prayer form by first explaining the steps of the prayer. The main steps of *Lectio Divina* are as follows:

- ✧ Quiet the environment, the body and the mind.
- ✧ Read the selected Scripture passage slowly.
(Use a passage from today's Gospel reading.)
- ✧ Pause for reflection, and read the passage again.
- ✧ Pause for reflection and read the passage a third time.
- ✧ Initiate discussion in small groups. Ask the students to discuss the words that drew their attention, how they connected with various aspects of the reading, and how they are called to act on what they learn about the reading.

Making a Good Confession

Most teens participated in the Sacrament of Reconciliation for the first time as elementary aged children. Their ability to self-analyze and perceive their sins and shortcomings in life has also grown and changed. Help teens prepare to participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation (if they are willing; never force teens to take part in a sacrament). When leading the discussion have on hand and distribute *Preparing for Confession* by Paul Turner (published by Liturgy Training Publications). This pastoral resource will help teens prepare more fully for the sacrament.

Closing Prayer

*Lord Jesus Christ,
you opened the eyes of the blind man and you can
open our eyes too.
Help us to see your truth
and embrace the power of light over darkness so
that we will be transformed in your love.
You live and reign for ever and ever.
Amen.*

For Next Sunday

To help teens prepare for next Sunday's Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at www.ltp.org/lwgr. Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.