

Lent 4th Sunday A – Reality and Appearance

There exists extremes between:

Two anointings – one old and one new

Two blindness - one physical and one spiritual

Two healings – one light and one sight

Jesus spat and laid His hands upon the blind man, to show that His divine word, accompanied by his actions conveys power. From the first moment of the Incarnation, whose feast we celebrated yesterday with the Solemnity of the Annunciation, a new principle was introduced into our existential framework called theandric actions. With the advent of God made man in Christ, divine actions are now mixed with human actions. A sort of dualistic presence (not dualism) is manifest. Jesus being a divine Person from all eternity acts not from one but two natures: divine and human. The healing of the blind man is a classic example of divine power working through human acts and gestures. Jesus could have just said to the man born blind 'open your eyes' but he didn't. He used matter as a substance in which divine power would be manifest. As Christ is divine power made manifest in human flesh so too are his actions. In addition, the man was sent to wash his eyes so that the emergence of sight would be gradual and less alarming.

This is the Fourth Sunday in Lent. Traditionally, this day is known as Laetare Sunday, from the Latin word “rejoice,” the first word in the introductory antiphon for today’s Liturgy, based on the words of Isaiah 66:10. Rejoice as we anticipate the Resurrection of the Lord. Such joy, however, only comes after the sorrow of the cross.

So this Sunday is one of contrasts. In the book of Samuel we are reminded at the anointing of David as the second king of Israel, that God does not judge by appearances. David was the least likely candidate to be chosen. He was the youngest and not even present when the prophet came. It would have seemed that he was not even in the running to be anointed. The contrast here between reality and appearance is stark.

Being aware of our choices and judgments, Saint Paul contrasts the light with darkness and reminds us who belong to God to make choices with the light – in the presence of God's grace. In the Gospel there is the contrast between spiritual and physical blindness. The Pharisees who should see cannot and the man who cannot see can. The blind man before his cure is unable to fake sight while Christ's enemies cannot fake blindness. In this episode, the most unlikely person, namely the blind man, receives the light of faith in Jesus, while the religion-oriented, law-educated Pharisees remain spiritually blind. "There are none so blind, as those who will not see."

In our world we encounter extremes. We have to choose between reality and appearance. Just look at this planet. It seems that the Sun goes around us each day and yet it doesn't. Reality and appearance differ. Look at the stars on a moonless night. Their light and brilliance seems not so far away yet every star you see in the night sky is bigger and brighter than our sun. And don't stars twinkle, especially when they are near the horizon. One star, Sirius, twinkles, sparkles and flashes so much that people actually report it as a UFO. But in fact, the twinkling is not a property of the stars, but of Earth's turbulent atmosphere. As the light from a star passes through the atmosphere it has the effect of deflecting the light as it were a ball in a pinball machine. The result is “twinkling.”

As we encounter extremes in nature and our lives, let us discern between reality and appearance so that we make good choices. Our moral life consists of many choices, like rungs on a ladder, that lead us towards God or away from him. During Lent, one good choice we all can make is to go to Confession before Easter.

Sometimes people say that they don't need to go because they have done nothing wrong. In reality, we all sin daily. A thorough examination of conscience – see our website – will help us detect any cracks or flaws in our moral character that need addressing. A good confession is a tonic for the soul, giving joy and peace of mind.

Saint John Vianney, renowned Confessor once said: “My children, we cannot comprehend the goodness of God towards us in instituting this great Sacrament of Penance....It is a beautiful thought, my children, that we have a Sacrament which heals the wounds of our soul! But we must receive it with good dispositions. Otherwise we make new wounds upon the old ones.... These persons say, “I do not know what is the matter with me:’ . . . They are tormented, and they do not know why. They have not that agility which makes one go straight to the good God; they have something heavy and weary about them which fatigues them.”

In more recent years, Saint Padre Pio spent most of his day hearing confessions. In fact, during 1967 Padre Pio confessed about 25.000 people. An average of 70 people per day.

He once said that: “Confession should be made no later than every eight days.”

"Do not dwell on sins that have been already confessed. Jesus has forgiven them."

"The mercy of God, my child, is infinitely greater than your malice.”

We ask Our Lady to help us face reality and dispel any false appearances we have conjured up regarding ourselves so that we who are spiritually blind may see the light, as we pray, 'Lord that I may see'.