

## **Fourth Sunday of Lent: Step Out From Darkness!**

1 Samuel 16:1b,6-7,10-13a; Psalm 23:1-3a,3b-4,5,6; Ephesians 5:8-14; John 9:1-41

Dear CCST family and friends,

Greetings on this Laetare Sunday, which means to rejoice from the introduction of the Mass; rejoice Jerusalem, and the rose vestments are worn this day. We are mid-way through our preparation for Easter, and we rejoice in anticipation of the victory Jesus won on the Cross! I pray you are feeling blessed this week!

I remember browsing through Facebook, and I saw several pictures with the caption "feeling blessed," which made me smile. There was a picture of five people dressed elegantly and having dinner; the caption was "feeling blessed." There was a picture of someone standing next to a good-looking person, probably a celebrity, and the caption was "feeling blessed." There was a selfie photo shot, a family celebration, and the caption was "feeling blessed." There was also a picture of an expensive brand-name bag, and the caption was, "finally feeling blessed." I am happy to see all those feeling blessed moments. Of course, we know they are fleeting, short-lived "feeling blessed" moments; no matter how we prolong the moments or how expensive the things we possess in the days come, they are out of fashion. Some upload more best new pictures and, occasionally, change their profile pictures with the desires many will like. Seeing what has been uploaded creates a sense of happiness and being noticed, but it could also cause disappointment due to unwelcome remarks and guests. But, underneath why we keep doing this is our profound longing for God.

Consider bringing this longing in prayer: "I will only be happy completely in you, my Lord Jesus. Please Grant me the grace not to forget to look forward to the heavenly "feeling blessed" that only you can provide. Jesus, have mercy. Amen."

The blind person in our gospel today was blessed with feeling blessed. He never did see any light since his birth. He was deprived of the joy of seeing the shapes, forms, colors, and beauty of creation. He recognized people only by their voices, touch, and smell all his life. His miserable condition was not because of sin, as Jesus's disciples may think, and others. He was a helpless beggar, forced to stay outside the synagogue begging for money to survive. He was at the mercy of the passersby who either gave alms or were oblivious to his presence. Jesus comes to him in his helplessness, as in our lives. Before Jesus came into his life, all was dark and sad, and he was reduced to nothing. Jesus changed his life. He was released from the darkness without his own merit. His only participation was to follow his command to wash his face in the Pool of Siloam (which means sent). He joyfully returned home with new eyes, remembering "feeling blessed" by his encounter with Jesus.

But something was wrong on that first moment he got his sight. His healing became the talk of the town: those who knew him were suspicious of believing his healing; authorities would expel those who believed that Jesus healed him from the synagogue; Some attributed the healing to the devil because it happened during the Sabbath; the Pharisees interrogated him and even went the extent of investigating his family, but still doubted his claim that Jesus healed him. Then later, they threw him out because they didn't like his testimony that the one who healed him was a prophet.

What happened here? There is another blindness worse than physical blindness -- it is spiritual blindness. The Pharisees, who claimed to know all about religion and followers of Moses, couldn't see the good in the helpless beggar. On the other hand, fear made the neighbors distance themselves from believing because the authorities warned that those who believed would be expelled from the synagogue. There is no more profound blindness than the blindness of the people who do not want to see!

When Jesus met the healed blind man for the second time and asked if he believed him, he immediately confessed, "I do believe, Lord" (Jn 9:38). He was not just healed from physical blindness; he was blessed with faith and became a follower of Jesus sent to testify to the light. After granting him sight, Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment, so that those who do not see might see, and those who do see might become blind" (John 9:38). Jesus comes to our lives so that we may be blind to sin, and he enlightens us so that we may see Him as our only true light. We listen to the fraternal reminder of St. Paul for those who believe Jesus: "Brothers and sisters: You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light, for light produces every kind of goodness and righteousness, and truth. Try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the fruitless works of darkness; rather, expose them" (Eph 5:8-11).

In the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, Jesus is the center of our feeling blessed. But we are more than "feeling blessed" because the Lord talks to us during the proclamation of the Word of God, and he inspires us. We are more than "feeling blessed" because we are privileged to offer God our thanksgiving for blessing us with the fruits of our labors. We are more than feeling blessed because the Savior is not just standing before us but giving himself to us through the Holy Eucharist to nourish our restless spirits and enlighten our minds.

Our faith in Jesus graces us to see our world and life through the eyes of Jesus as an enlightened person. An enlightened person does not base his decision on emotion but on obedience to God, like Samuel's decision to choose David as king (1 Sam 16:12). An enlightened person will not quickly feel dejected when confronted with difficulties because God is the object of our feeling blessed. An enlightened person will not easily give up, knowing that Jesus will never give up on us. An enlightened person will not be quickly excited by the glitters of the world because our hearts rejoiced only in God. An enlightened person carries the burdens of life with joy because we look forward to the blessings of heaven more than the blessings of the world. Because the Lord is our all, our Shepherd, there is nothing we shall want (cf. Ps 23:1).

God bless you!

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