

Fourth Sunday of Lent

The Christian Call to become light for the world to sustain life and livelihood options

Special Theme for the 4th Sunday

22 March, 2020

1st Reading: Samuel 16:1,6-7,10-13
2nd Reading: Ephesians 5:8-14
Gospel Reading: John 9:1-41

Mass Introduction

Dear Friends, today on the fourth Sunday of Lent, through the readings we hear how God selects an insignificant person as the king over Israel, this displays the almighty's work of selecting the poorest and least and upholding as the highest among all humans.

The gospel reads about Jesus healing the blind man. This miracle of Jesus has always been different from other miracles where the healed asks for his healing, and the healing received is a reward of his/her faith in Jesus. Jesus through this gospel declares that he is the light of the world. If Jesus is present, there is light and illumination. This brings us to the special theme of this Sunday - "The Christian Call: to become light for the world to sustain life and livelihood options for one's brothers and sisters". Every Christian on Earth has ONE calling in common. It's the calling to be a light in the world. Darkness has surrounded our brothers and sisters living without a sustainable livelihood in this world. We are called to light their lives by providing opportunities and supporting them to build their lives. Are we ready in this season of lent to be the light of the world, spread light in the lives of others?

Homily

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ,

Awareness is light — an inner light comes on when we realize the absence of light around

— which is why we say: I see! But this "seeing" is insight, not just eyesight. And with insight comes energy to respond to the awareness. We become proactive to eliminate the darkness.

Today's scripture reading invite us to know that God intervenes in the lives of the people and empowers them to become the channels of transformation. That is the plan of God and call for each one of us. Letter to the Ephesians: St. Paul exhorts the people to live as children of light and find out what pleases the Lord (Cf. Eph 5: 8-10). In the first reading God elects an insignificant boy named David. He endows him with authority to rule over Israel. "David reigned over all Israel, doing what was just and right for all his people". (1 Chronicles 18: 14). The Gospel narrates an incident of Jesus capacitating a blind man to "see". He starts by giving him eyesight, but by the end of the narration this man also has insight. An inner light reveals who Jesus is. Now not only does he see, he understands too! But not so with the other people in the narration. They have eyesight but no insight. They see but do not understand!

His neighbours and family see that a miracle has happened, but they are afraid to acknowledge. They are cowards. They don't want to upset the powers and status quo of despotism and inequity, so they say; they don't know how it happened, which leaves them ignorant and in a life of darkness... without insight. It is like we are not ready to know the truth, deliberately avoiding insight and remaining in that state of indifference. Such action invites retribution!

Then there are the Pharisees. Fear is the cause of ignorance for man's neighbours and family. But Jesus' adversaries are reduced to

ignorance by hatred, which has already shut the doors of their minds to him and pride that lead them to think that they know more than they really do. They knew they are not supposed to work on the Sabbath, and they noted what Jesus did on the Sabbath, so they concluded that Jesus cannot be "from God because he does not keep the Sabbath." Of course, by now they were just looking for an excuse to get rid of him. They were blinded by hatred and pride, which deprived them of insight into who Jesus is.

By contrast, the man born blind is open to Jesus and is courageous, but there is one odd thing about this miracle: he never asked to be healed! Almost all of Jesus' other miracles of healing follow a pattern: the person request for healing, Jesus asks if they believe in him, they say "yes" and then he works the miracle because of their faith. That's not what happens here: Jesus cures this man without being asked, saying that the reason for this miracle was, "so that the works of God might be made visible".... We see that Jesus is the "Light of the World," hence we have insight and not just eyesight. And while this miracle doesn't fit the usual pattern, the end result is the same: the blind man puts his faith in Jesus.

You and I are like the people in the narration. There are certain things to which we are blind and lack insight. Sometimes this is wilful blindness due to fear. We see this in our national debate regarding unemployment, farmers' unrest, financial exclusion, displacement of the poor. These are some of the challenging issues not having sustainable solutions. The globally accepted Sustainable Development Goals like 'No Poverty', 'Ending Hunger' and 'Ensuring Healthy Lives' - that every government should be working on, needs to be outlined clearly and then implemented through effective policy-making. Formulation of a strong framework to approach basic SDG, is in fact, the only solution to bring about change. We are afraid to be proactive in enforcing the government to act. Sometimes our lack of

insight is due to ignorance, improper information, self-centeredness which keeps us from seeing the realities. Sometimes we are blinded by hatred or pride. But it need not be that way. Jesus is the "Light of the World" and he invites us to be like the man he heals in today's Gospel: open and courageous, trying our best to live in the light ourselves making sure we share our resources with the needy and then striving courageously to bring the light to others.

May this Lenten season become a grace-filled moment for each of us, realizing the authority and responsibility given to us by Jesus through the sacrament of baptism, sharing the Kingship like David in the first reading, claiming the anointing of God in our personal life and living it to lead others to life. Let us declare Jesus as the true light and bear the torch of responsibility towards society to bring a transformation. The Church takes initiatives in various platforms to make a difference in the lives of the people. During this time of spiritual renewal it invites every child of God to become sensitive towards those who are deprived. Let us commit ourselves to work to sustain life and sustainable livelihood options for our brothers and sisters.

(This homily was prepared by Fr. Antony Fernandes, Executive Director, UKSVK)

Prayers of the Faithful

Celebrant: Christ our Lord came among us as the light of the world, that we might walk in his light, and not in the darkness of death. Let us praise him and place our prayers before him.

Response - Lord, help us to be the Light

1. For the Pope, Bishops and all religious, may they be constantly assisted by the Spirit of the Risen Lord, and become the light for the people of the world. May they impart new vigour to the Christian Living and holiness of life to every member of the Church.

Let us pray to the Lord. R/-

2. For all political leaders and all those in authority, that they may be the light for the unemployed and marginalised in the country and break down the wall that isolate and marginalise the citizens.

Let us pray to the Lord. R/-

3. We ask your blessing on all those who have lost their homes, their livelihoods, their security and their hope. Help us to respond with generosity in prayer, in assistance, in aid to the best of our abilities.

Let us pray to the Lord. R/-

4. Lord, we pray for our families, friends and for those who suffer around the world. In our time of need, we pray that we would draw close to You. May we experience Your sufficiency and see Your light in the darkness.

Let us pray to the Lord. R/-

5. Lord, we thank You for giving us the courage to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves. Help us to see the poor and the needy through Your eyes and to show compassion and love to them the way You do.

Let us pray to the Lord. R/-

Celebrant: God of mercy, help us to grow in your likeness, open our eyes to see your hand at work in the splendour of creation, in the beauty of human life. Teach us to be faithful in seeking the common good for your sake, that your light may shine on the whole human family by means of your Church. Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.



Fasting, that is, learning to change our attitude towards others and all of creation, turning away from the temptation to “devour” everything to satisfy our voracity and being ready to suffer for love, which can fill the emptiness of our hearts.

Prayer, which teaches us to abandon idolatry and the self-sufficiency of our ego, and to acknowledge our need of the Lord and his mercy.

Almsgiving, whereby we escape from the insanity of hoarding everything for ourselves in the illusory belief that we can secure a future that does not belong to us.

Let us leave behind our selfishness and self-absorption and turn to Jesus' Pasch. Let us stand beside our brothers and sisters in need, sharing our spiritual and material goods with them.

MESSAGE OF
HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS FOR LENT 2019

