

Fr James's Homily for the Fourth Sunday of Lent 2020

First Reading: I Samuel 16: 1-13

Second Reading: Ephesians 5:8-14

Gospel: John 9:1-41

I hope you will be able to come to church for a while today, or through the week. Especially note that our churches are open for a time in the evenings of the week. Come and be in the presence of the Lord Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Pray and rest in His presence, but please be aware of the need to keep distant from others. However, do not underestimate that your presence in the relative distance will help and sustain others.

The scriptures this Sunday are all about that true "seeing" that needs to be who we are as Catholics. To see the world for what it is - God's creation and treasure, but constantly in need of conversion and reconciliation. How poignant is that truth today! To see that we too need to see by the light of Christ who in the Gospel says He is the "Light of the World." The man born blind in the Gospel slowly comes to see by that light after he is healed "to give glory to God", and ends in worship. Today read this great Gospel slowly, and several times, with the other scriptures, and pray that all the faithful may see their need for constant conversion to Christ, that we may be that light around us.

But notice, too, how in the Sundays of Lent we have been stopping off at points in the history of salvation, just as the Gospels are revealing aspects of the mystery of Jesus the saviour. All of this is preparing us to celebrate Holy Week, which we will have to do in a very particular way this year - but a way that may well help us richly in years to come.

Today, after the Garden of Eden, then the call of Abraham, then the crisis of the people of Israel in the desert, we are shown King David in the First Book of Samuel. (Remember - Jesus must be of the house and line of David; God is working His rescue plan here.)

Very beautifully we find again the theme of seeing and looking. ***"God does not see as man sees;...God looks at the heart"*** What is it the Lord God sees in David, in His heart? What will He use in His plan of salvation?

- David the simple shepherd shows us true humility. You have heard me say it often: humility doesn't mean putting ourselves down; it means being properly

and healthily rooted in the ground. Pride (remember Adam and Eve) is often called the greatest sin because it unroots us, tricking us to make the world in our own image, to see the world wrong. When we let go of those illusions, God can become who he wants to in us - we can see straight.

- David is a great fighter. For example, as famously against Goliath the giant. The Fathers of the Church see in David's struggles a symbol of our struggle against sin. He shows us as we saw in the Israelites in the desert last Sunday, the truth that our search to be converted will be a battle against forces sent to discourage us and trip us up. David very spectacularly goes wrong, of course, when he stops fighting, and gives in to pride. God, however, still has plans for him.
- The bit I like best: David is a poet and a singer. Read the Psalms of David, or the beautiful beginning of the Second Book of Samuel and David's lament. I have a treasured possession - a wooden statue of David the Psalmist made by a craftsman at York Minster when I was a small child, copying a statue in the Cathedral, evoking our need to give voice to our prayer. Our words, our everyday prayers, our honesty in worship and our seeking to console the Lord will communicate our faith and the meaning of Jesus in a powerful way. It will sing to the world. There are no better words than yours. David has his place in the plan of salvation. So does each of us.

As usual I have gone on too long! I hope some of these words - some are mine, some borrowed from elsewhere - will help you to pray this Sunday, and in the week ahead - let us bring our parish, our families, our neighbours and all the world to God, interceding for all these needs. Read the scriptures for today more than once and let God the Holy Spirit in them speak to you.

We need to be able to see what is going on around us at this time. It is scary. It throws us off balance. It is "bewildering" as Cardinal Vincent said on Friday. But we need to see it all by Him who is the Light of the World. Remember that Mass is being said each day in all our parishes throughout England - all of us are united with the sacrifice of Jesus, and perhaps "seeing" anew what we do when we are at Mass in ordinary circumstances. Come and be in the presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. See Him. Console Him, and be consoled by Him, that we may be that consolation that all our neighbours need today, and have always needed, if only they could see!

Amen.