



Bringing Home the Word

Fourth Sunday of Lent (A)
March 19, 2023

I See

By Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

Do we? Do we really see? Do we understand? There is so much that is simply misunderstood or unnoticed. Little about life is uncomplicated, and even that which is uncomplicated so often slips right by us. This is true about a life lived alone or with others. It is also true about our life with God.

The first reading is an example of this. God will choose one of the sons of Jesse to be king. Will it be the eldest, the rightful heir? If not him, perhaps it will be the brightest one or the most pious. All of these highly valued characteristics would certainly be necessary for one

to be an effective king. However, Jesse and his sons did not see in the same way as God. Their youngest brother, the one tending the sheep, would be God's choice. He was the one God wanted, and so David was anointed in the presence of his family.

The Gospel tells another story about seeing. In it, Jesus restores a man's sight. What began as a story about physical blindness and sight then becomes a lesson about seeing and understanding the mystery of God's power as opposed to refusing to see and understand it. No one in the story could claim that the man had not really been blind. Then why did they refuse to acknowledge that God's power had done something marvelous in their presence? But they did refuse. We can, indeed, choose to be blind. †

Sunday Readings

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

God does not see as a mortal, who sees the appearance. The LORD looks into the heart.

Ephesians 5:8-14

Take no part in the fruitless works of darkness; rather expose them.

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

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."



There is so much that is simply misunderstood or unnoticed.

A Word from Pope Francis

The first Christians...used to say that the community of Christians, that is the Church, is the "mystery of the moon," because it gave light but it was not its own light, it was the light it received from Christ. We too can be "mystery of the moon:" giving light received from the sun, which is Christ, the Lord.

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REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Do I blame others for their ill-health or misfortune?
- Does bias or prejudice make me blind to the gifts of others?

Uncontrollable Joy!

By Fr. Byron Miller, CSsR

Mark Twain is thought to have once quipped: “A German joke is no laughing matter,” which speaks to the untrue notion that Germans aren’t funny.

While our faith is meant to be a serious endeavor, it’s not defined as “no laughing matter.” On the contrary: joyfulness is not a hindrance to holiness, it’s an expression of it! *Laetare* means “to rejoice.” A spirituality that radiates the joy of Easter is every bit as authentic as one that reflects the severity of Lent, and all the more inviting, too! A Redemptorist classmate of mine liked to say, “None of us are baptized in pickle juice.”

According to Karl Rahner, the German Jesuit theologian, “Only the person who has a gift for affection can have a true sense of humor. A good laugh is a sign of love; it may be said to give us a glimpse of, or a first lesson in, the love that God bears for every one of us.” Another theologian, Karl Barth, stated simply: “Laughter is the closest thing to the grace of God.”

Imagine what it’s like to see for the first time after being blind from birth. How could the blind man in John’s Gospel refrain from laughing at the awesome blessing he received when Christ restored his sight? How could his eyes not weep tears of unspeakable joy at his good fortune?

An ancient Greek Orthodox tradition sets aside Easter Monday for jokes and laughter to celebrate Christ’s triumph over death. It may be rooted in St. John Chrysostom’s vivid image of the risen Christ laughing at the devil, who is at his wit’s end. They rejoice! †

These reflections were excerpted from Daybreaks: Daily Reflections for Lent and Easter by Fr. Daniel P. Horan, OFM, available from Liguori Publications. To learn more and review our complete list of Daybreaks authors, including Fr. Ron Rolheiser, OMI; Fr. Byron Miller, CSsR; Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA; and others, visit Liguori.org.

Abundant Laughter

By Fr. Byron Miller, CSsR

In *Between Heaven and Mirth* (HarperOne, 2012), Jesuit Fr. James Martin recounts a story by Margaret Silf of two friends who mourned the death of a mutual friend. At her gravesite, they planted what they thought were daffodil bulbs. Imagine their surprise when they returned in the spring to pay their respects and found a crop of onions! They laughed until they cried—and they felt certain their friend was right in there laughing with them.

At the beginning of Lent—the name is derived from the word *spring*—we solemnly soil our foreheads in remembrance of the Garden of Eden. With ashen faces and grave Lenten disciplines, we till our hardened hearts through purposeful penance, fasting, and almsgiving, and bury the guilt that we won’t let die. Then, when we’re born anew, our tears

of sorrow are transplanted into tears of joy and laughter!

According to Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, “In hell there is no hope and no laughter. In purgatory there is no laughter, but there is hope. In heaven, hope is no longer necessary because laughter reigns.” Our faith assures us of a God who takes pleasure in his people and delights in being with us! †



So that our eyes may be open to your presence everywhere and in everyone, we pray—Lord, let us be like you.

The Redemptorists

WEEKDAY READINGS

March 20–25

Monday, St. Joseph: 2 Sm 7:4–5a, 12–14a, 16 / Rom 4:13, 16–18, 22 / Mt 1:16, 18–21, 24a or Lk 2:41–51a

Tuesday, Lenten Weekday: Ez 47:1–9, 12 / Jn 5:1–16

Wednesday, Lenten Weekday: Is 49:8–15 / Jn 5:17–30

Thursday, Lenten Weekday: Ex 32:7–14 / Jn 5:31–47

Friday, Lenten Weekday: Wis 2:1a, 12–22 / Jn 7:1–2, 10, 25–30

Saturday, Annunciation of the Lord: Is 7:10–14; 8:10 / Heb 10:4–10 / Lk 1:26–38



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