

HOMILY – 4TH SUNDAY IN LENT – 26 MARCH 2017

In today's Gospel, Jesus heals a blind man, born blind, so that he can see for the first time. The healing of this blind man exposes the spiritual blindness of the Pharisees and teaches us that faith in God gives us a vision of the world that prepares us for salvation.

Do you remember that beautiful old Irish sonnet made into a hymn? "Be thou my vision oh Lord of my heart, naught be all else to me save what thou art"? What Holy Scripture is inviting us to see is the whole of life through the vision of faith. Without faith in God, we are blind to the truth of wisdom and love. This is revealed in the First Reading from the Book of Samuel, where the prophet Samuel visits Jesse and his sons in Bethlehem, looking for the one chosen to be the King of the Jews.

The Lord God makes a telling statement or correction. 'Good does not see as man sees, man looks at appearances but the Lord looks at the heart'. In other words, be careful not to be impressed by the outward appearance of people, be more concerned with what is in their hearts.

I wonder how many good or loyal friends, even potential wives or husbands, have been lost or rejected because of outward appearances rather than the goodness of the true person?

The same applies to job applications. How many times have the best candidates been rejected because of their outward appearance?

To go back to the Gospel again, let us be aware of the spiritual blindness of the Pharisees. They are so caught up in law and self-righteousness that they are blind to the beauty of the miracle that Jesus has done, healing a blind man. Instead they are more concerned about whether this man's parents had sinned for him to be born blind, which is superstitious nonsense and they are 'nit-picking' that Jesus, a Jew, broke the Law of the Sabbath, by making a paste with his fingers, to heal the man – you see making a paste on the Sabbath was construed as work, therefore in breach of the Law.

Jesus, and this is very important, exposes the spiritual blindness of those who are not in faith with the one true God. Where there is a lack of faith, or more so, no faith at all, we are in a very dangerous place. Our level of judgement and vision of life is severely blotted out. Not seeing the world as God see it, only as man sees it. When Pope Benedict XVI came to Westminster, the Houses of Parliament in 2010, the scene of the terrorist attack 3-4 days ago, he beautifully told the political leaders of our lands, that if they exclude the moral conscience of the Gospel from formulating legislation for our country and the wider world, they do so at the peril of all humanity. The central question at issue then is this, where is the ethical foundation for political choices to be found. The Catholic tradition maintains that the objective means governing right action are accessible to reason, emerging from the content of revelation. The role of religion in political debate is to help purify and shed light upon the application of reason, to the discovery of objective moral principles. Therefore, we need to promote the dialogue of faith and reason at every level of public life and national life.

Christian ethics seek to protect all human lives from the blindness of persecution and destruction. There was news recently that the Belgian Parliament is now debating the possibility of granting minors ie from 13 to 18 years old, the right to voluntary euthanasia. It is deeply reckless and dangerous to exclude faith from the moral equation of our conscience.

As we enter these last weeks of Lent, let us be open in faith, to seeing life in a new light. To seeing those around me in a different light. To taking away my own spiritual blindness that casts a shadow over my own attitude to those I so easily have rejected. May my faith enrich the important choices I

make, so that, like Samuel, or the Pharisees, I don't overlook the possibility that I am in the presence of the Messiah.