

The 4th Sunday of Lent - Year A - Laetare Sunday – 3/15/2026 – Msgr. Peter Quang Nguyen

First Reading – 1 Samuel 16:1B, 6-7, 10-13A: Samuel is sent by the Lord to anoint one of Jesse's sons as the new king of Israel, replacing Saul. Initially, Samuel believes that Eliab, Jesse's eldest son, must be the chosen one, but the Lord reveals to him that he looks at the heart, not outward appearances, and leads him to anoint David, the youngest son, who is a shepherd.

Responsorial Psalm – Psalm 23: The Lord is a faithful and loving shepherd who provides for and protects his sheep. The psalmist describes the Lord's provision of green pastures and still waters, his guidance through dark valleys, and his comforting presence, and concludes by affirming his confidence in the Lord's goodness and mercy throughout his life.

Second Reading – Ephesians 5:8-14: Believers should live as children of light, putting aside the works of darkness and walking in the ways of righteousness. The passage emphasizes the importance of exposing and reproofing evil deeds, and notes that everything that is exposed by the light becomes visible and that Christ will shine on those who follow him.

Gospel – John 9:1-41: Jesus heals a man who was born blind, but the Pharisees are skeptical and investigate the miracle. They interrogate the man and his parents, and ultimately cast the man out for declaring his belief in Jesus as the Son of God.

My Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

“SO THAT THE LORD’S WONDERFUL DEEDS MAY BE REVEALED”

The Fourth Sunday of Lent is commonly known as *Letare* Sunday. *Letare* is a Latin word, the first word of today's Entrance Hymn, meaning “rejoice,” taken from Isaiah 66:10. It signifies our joy at having completed more than half of Lent, a time to reflect on our accomplishments and to rejoice in the upcoming celebration of Passover.

The Gospel reading for today is quite long, revolving around the story of a man born blind who was given sight by Jesus.

As we have shared before, the Gospel of John is more symbolic than historical, and even in its historical accounts, it uses symbolic language. On the Third Sunday of Lent, we hear the story "at Jacob's well," about a woman who symbolizes the Samaritan "Gentiles" who had served five generations and, even in their sixth generation, were worshipping someone who was not God in spirit and truth. Today, the story of the man born blind is also full of symbolic meaning for the "people of God" in Judea, who thought they had sight but were blind in spirit, failing to recognize God in Jesus.

Indeed, perhaps upon hearing this lengthy story, we cannot help but wonder, because a blind man suddenly regaining his sight—no crime or violation of any law—was not a transgression, yet the Jewish authorities convened a court, summoned the "offender's" parents for questioning, and expelled him from the faith simply for "the crime of regaining sight without permission."

While it may not be entirely true, we shouldn't dwell on the percentage of truth, but rather focus on the message that today's Gospel conveys through the story of "*Jesus healing a man born blind.*"

Let's explore some key points:

1. To reveal God's work.

When the disciples saw the blind man, they asked Jesus, "Was it his sin or the sin of his parents that he became blind...?" Jesus affirmed that it was not due to anyone but for the sake of God's work. God was revealed in him.

The concept of illness being caused by the individual or even by sins committed three or four generations ago, with descendants suffering the consequences, was deeply ingrained in the Jewish psyche. Therefore, Jesus' disciples were no exception when they questioned Him.

Although different from the Buddhist concept of *karma*, the Jewish belief that illness is caused by sin stemmed from the belief that God rewards and punishes three or four generations, even though the prophets had spoken out against this notion of "the father eating sour grapes and the son getting a toothache." And because of this belief, they worshipped a God who was strict to the point of cruelty.

Father Anthony de Melo once humorously replied: "Man gives birth to God and man also kills God." Indeed, the ancient Jews created a God according to their own will and envisioned a Messiah to satisfy their ambitions, thus killing a loving God and rejecting a Jesus who differed from their conception.

Jesus It was affirmed that the blind man's blindness was not due to his own sin or the sin of his parents, but rather SO THAT GOD'S PLAN COULD BE REVEALED in him. Thus, He aimed to dispel the misconceptions of the Jews and to show the position and role of each person in God's mysterious plan.

For us, too, we still want to see a God judging us in a tangible way, without seeing our own sinfulness before a God rich in love. We easily despise and look down on someone less fortunate than ourselves.

2. A Contrast.

Implicitly, the Gospel author shows us a paradox: The man who was blind his whole life (as the scribes described him) and uneducated "saw" Jesus, who came from God (cf. John 9:30-33); while the sighted Jewish scribes with biblical knowledge did not see Him. Where did Jesus come from?

In fact, it was their envy and ambition, their fear of losing their positions and their power, and especially because Jesus' ways did not satisfy their ambitions, that prevented them from recognizing, and deliberately chose not to recognize, Jesus. Their spiritual eyes were blind, as Jesus said to them: "If you were blind, you would not be guilty. But now you say, 'We see,' so your guilt remains!" (John 9:41).

Because of jealousy, the blind man's recovery of his sight was blown out of proportion by the scribes, who used the excuse of "being healed on the Sabbath" to find a reason to condemn Jesus. The blind man himself was also implicated, treated as a criminal and expelled for daring to affirm Jesus's truth.

In every era, when people are jealous and opposed to each other, they exaggerate everything and look for even the smallest loopholes to harm one another. They easily resort to despicable methods to humiliate each other.

Lord, grant that we may always recognize that every person and every event that occurs is the mysterious work of God, so that we may trust in and entrust ourselves to Him. Amen.