

Homily, 30 March 2014

Fourth Sunday of Lent

1 Samuel 16:1b,6-7,10-13a; Psalm 23:1-3a, 3b-4,5,6; Ephesians 5:8-14; John 9:1-41



“Not as man sees does God see, because man sees the appearance but the LORD looks into the heart.”



What do David, in the first reading, and the blind beggar, in the Gospel, have in common?

Each one was chosen by God.

David was chosen to be the king of Israel.

The blind beggar was chosen *“so that the works of God might be made visible through him.”*

Both choices were unexpected and surprising ... especially to them.

But God, who probes the mind and the heart, saw something in them that they didn't see themselves. David was not just a shepherd boy, the man healed by Jesus was more than just a blind beggar.



In the movie Stardust, when Tristan, the hero, and Yvaine, the fallen star, are imprisoned in a pirate ship, they talk about finding themselves in an unexpected and dark adventure.

During that conversation Tristan declares that *“a shop boy like him could have never imagined an adventure so big ...”*

And then Yvaine says something quite interesting: *“If there's one thing I've learned about all my years watching Earth,”* she tells Tristan, *“is that people aren't what they may seem. There are shop boys, and there are boys who just happen to work in a shop for the time being. And trust me Tristan, you're no shop boy. You saved my life.”*

Quite often, others see us very differently than we see ourselves. God certainly does.



Yet we still live false lives – unauthentic lives. We say to ourselves:

“I am just a shop boy”, or,
 “I am blind”, or,
 “I am better than others”, or
 “I am deserving” or even
 “I am no good”.

Why do we lie to ourselves?

Sometimes we do it out of fear.

It took courage for the blind man to speak the truth to the Pharisees. It might have been easier just to remain poor and blind. He knew how to do that.

Sometimes, we let our addictions tell us who we are.

Sometimes we do it because we are sinners, because we love our vices: envy, pride, greed or because we want respect. And we often think these things will make us happy.

Perhaps that’s the key: we think a false life will make us happier.

But most often, I think we just don’t know ourselves the way we should, and we don’t give God the chance to show us the truth about ourselves.

That’s the irony of the Christian life: if you surrender your life to God, he will give it back to you in good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing.

We have past the mid-point in Lent. How are you doing in your spiritual practices so far? How is your prayer life? Are you making time to sit with the Lord and listen?

A wise Benedictine abbot has said that “*Silence is a gateway to the soul, and the soul is the gateway to God.*” If you haven’t been praying much, there’s still time – there always is – just sit quietly and listen. Let God tell you about the person deep within you that he loves so very much.



When I was a little boy, I used to spend Saturday mornings at my Aunt's house. Once when I was in a bad mood – cranky, self-centered, mean – my Aunt turned to someone else in the room and asked: “*Where is Richard? Some strange boy has taken possession of him, and I wish he would give him back.*”

When she turned back to me, I just turned around and went to the back room. Her remark shook me up because I knew I wasn't the person I ought to be ... and I loved my aunt. After a few minutes, I came back: not that other boy.

It was hard enough to hear my aunt say: “where is Richard?” I can't imagine what it would be like to hear it from God.

God knows us better than we know ourselves. Give him the chance to tell you about yourself. Let him show you what is false and what is true. Listen to him. Pray.