

Fourth Sunday of Lent



Fear and uncertainty can be a dangerous combination for those seeking recovery from addictions, compulsions, and unhealthy attachments. When events take place around us that seem beyond our control, we have the choice to isolate in our own thoughts or seek to connect with others close to us. Fear, secrecy, and denial tend to bubble when we stay in isolation, while personal connection yields peace, hope, and direction.

This Sunday's Responsorial Psalm offers an encouraging word through seasons of uncertainty:

*The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
Beside restful waters he leads me;
he refreshes my soul.
He guides me in right paths for his name's sake.
Even though I walk in the dark valley
I fear no evil; for you are at my side
With your rod and your staff
that give me courage.*

It is good for us to remember the darkness from which we've been freed. For many of us, addictive thought patterns and compulsive behaviors were the only tools we had in order to cope with the powerlessness of our condition. In recovery, we learn how to turn our attention inward and find God who dwells within us as we face temptation and difficulty.

This begins by recognizing the things we can control, the things we can't control, and the difference between the two. It is easier to put on slippers than to carpet the whole world. A profound change takes place when we focus our attention on changing ourselves rather than taking inventory on how the world around us is not suitable. God supports our transition from victimhood to victory with the guidance of the Twelve Steps, the sacramental life of the Church, and the hope shared by our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Pay attention to how God is calling you through the words of Saint Paul in this Sunday's Second Reading:

*You were once darkness,
but now you are light in the Lord.
Live as children of light,
for light produces every kind of goodness
and righteousness and truth.
Try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.*

*Therefore, it says:
"Awake, O sleeper,
and arise from the dead,
and Christ will give you light."*

While active in addiction and compulsive behavior, we relished in the tragedies of the world around us. Perhaps distracted by (and in denial of) our own personal crisis, we would simply redirect our anxiety onto the intangible forces of societal discontentment. This does not change the fact that our addictions, compulsions, and unhealthy attachments destroy valuable relationships, personal esteem, and self-dignity. Change begins with us.

We were blind, now we see. Jesus restores sight to a blind man in this Sunday's Gospel Reading describes Jesus restoring sight to a blind man, a miracle we can relate to our own recovery. At first, many are unwilling to believe what has taken place as some of the man's neighbors claim he isn't even the same person (we might experience the same when those from our past meet us in recovery). The Pharisees provide a nice contrast to a life rooted in personal honesty:

Some of the Pharisees who were with him heard this and said to him,

“Surely we are not also blind, are we?”

Jesus said to them,

“If you were blind, you would have no sin;

but now you are saying,

‘We see,’ so your sin remains.

The man with recovered sight comes to believe as he goes on to share the good news. Our transformation rests on the care and support of God and others. The COVID pandemic, which had us seeking fellowship in new ways three years ago, reminds us of just how powerless we really are. Therefore, let us turn to our Shepherd who has all power and refreshes our soul.

Reflection Questions

- Reflect on and describe how God has granted you the serenity to accept the things you cannot change, the courage to change the things you can, and the wisdom to know the difference.
- How do you maintain peace, hope, and stability in the midst of uncertainty?
- How has God restored sight to your life?

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Sunday Mass Readings this Week

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

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6

Second Reading: Ephesians 5:8-14

Gospel: John 9:1-41