

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

God does not see as man sees: for the Lord looks at the heart. It was the prophet Samuel, inspired by God's grace, that looked as God looks and chose the last son of Jesse, rejecting the other seven, in place of the youngest called David. God sees not as we do. Incidentally, for us to see anything we need light. One cannot see in the dark. In the second reading one notes that we are children of the light, says St Paul, that is, Christ's light enables us to see things by virtue of our faith that others cannot 'see', such as angels, divine forgiveness.

This theme of light, sight and seeing is central to the Gospel when the Lord heals the blind man. In this miracle, one of thirty-three, during his three years of public ministry, the Lord astounds the local authorities by working a miracle for this man, born blind from birth, who receives the power of sight from he who is the Light of the world.

Miracles of this type are termed *theandrical* because divine spiritual power is conveyed through human matter. It is a mix of the physical and the spiritual. On this occasion the Lord puts paste or mud on his eyes. We recall that God continues to heal and help us in this manner, by using matter, in the conveying of sanctifying grace in the sacraments, e.g water, bread, wine, oil, chrism.

God is always concerned about our plight and our spiritual sight. In the Gospel, the physically blind man receives sight while the morally blind Pharisees remain sightless. Today though some may possess the power of sight, it may even be 20x20 vision, many on account of the absence of divine light lack spiritual sight in their lives. Such people fail to achieve God's will in their lives and live in spiritual darkness in a most mundane manner. While others need time for the blurriness of their vision to pass before they can see God's will.

Such was the case in the life of St Patrick our popular Irish patron of the fifth century. Many do not know that he was British by birth. Kidnapped as a lad by Celtic sailors, he was a slave in Ireland for many years, learning the language and mixing with the people, before fleeing back to the British isles, where he sought to become a priest. Patrick had spiritual vision. Instead of being resentful for his wasted time overseas, he realised that his time in captivity provided him with a unique skill set: language, culture, contacts.

When Pope Celestine I wanted missionaries to evangelize Ireland, Patrick was overlooked – poor papal sight – and Bishop Palladius was sent instead. He died soon after. God does not see as man sees: for the Lord looks at the heart. It was the heart of Patrick that God sought to send as a missionary in 432 to Ireland. The legacy of this grand saint, was immense, and with much prayer penance, he converted the local chieftains to the faith and established dioceses. Irish Catholics, until recent decades, always had great clarity of godly vision. Why else in Ireland would one climb the slate ridden Croagh Patrick hill barefoot, as did Patrick, except for penance. Why else would one visit Lough Derg and make a Vigil of prayer and fasting except for penance, as did St. Patrick.

Another key player in this week of Lent is St Joseph, the greatest saint, after the Blessed Virgin Mary. This patriarch of the church, fulfilled the vision of God by celestial insights in his sleep. How many times did our foster father of the Lord receive spiritual visions? Four times he viewed the all pervasive will of God.

First Dream (Accept Mary): An angel instructs him not to fear taking her as his wife. Obedience

Second Dream (Flee to Egypt): An angel prompts him to flee to Egypt. Courage

Third Dream (Return to Israel): After Herod's death, an angel tells Joseph it is safe to return to Israel.

Fourth Dream (Settle in Galilee): An angel directs Joseph to make his home in Nazareth in Galilee. So the child could be called a Nazarene. By the way, if you ever need guidance or accommodation *Go To Joseph* the great provider of God's children for heavenly insights.

During this fourth week of Lent, beginning with Laetare Sunday, we rejoice as Catholics, that God has given us the ability to behold his will and to see his plan for us in his life. God does not see as man sees: for the Lord looks at the heart. In looking he transforms and purifies it so as to prepare us for that day. For only in the next life, which we call the beatific vision, will we see God not with our eyes but our spirits and in that hope we truly have joy.