

THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT - A

This is mid-Lent Sunday, Mothering Sunday, from the entrance antiphon of the Mass which says we should rejoice and be glad for our mother the heavenly Jerusalem, hoping we will find contentment 'at her consoling breasts.' The gospel story of the man born blind teaches us that the man not only regains his physical sight but also is able to see Jesus with the eyes of faith. In the first reading we have the anointing of David as king at Hebron and we learn from the story that God's choice of David would not have been Samuel's or Jesse choice. God doesn't think as men do. In the second reading Paul teaches we are children of light and should avoid the works of darkness.

The **First Reading** is from the first book of Samuel one of the historical books. Israel is now settling in the Promised Land with each tribe running its own affairs. When the Philistines invade the land, through the present day Gaza strip, the tribes of Israel of necessity come together under monarchical government with Saul as their first king. He is not successful (see 1Sam. ch13-15) which leads the way to David's anointing as king in today's reading. Saul continues as king with David fighting many battles for him until his death recorded at the end of the first book of Samuel. In the second book of Samuel there are two accounts of David being anointed, the first as king of Judah (2Sam. 2.4), the second as king of Israel, the northern kingdom (2Sam. 5.3).

In the reading, 16.1,6-7,10-13, the prophet Samuel is sent by God to anoint a new king because Saul although he asks for pardon has been rejected by God (see 1Sam. 15.10-35). God's choice for his newly anointed is not what Samuel or the father Jesse expects, what man sees as weak God can make strong. The youngest son of Jesse is chosen, a shepherd boy, and is anointed 'and the spirit of the Lord seized on David and stayed with him from that day on' showing God's approval and protection for David for it is from David's line that the future Christ would be born. That David comes from a shepherding background would seem to be important because when David is later anointed king over Israel the tribes of Israel say that God promises of David: "You are to shepherd my people Israel." David is to care for and protect the people leading the way like any good shepherd would so that they can follow in safety.

The **Responsorial Psalm**, Psalm 22, in response to the first reading is a well known psalm it speaks of those who listen to and follow God's word for 'the Lord is my shepherd', an act of faith in itself, and sheep, when they hear the shepherd's voice, follow him. The psalm shows God's care for those who follow him. In the first two stanzas the Lord is a shepherd leading along the path to salvation; in the third stanza the Lord is the host at the messianic banquet, the Jewish idea of heaven where the Lord welcomes me by anointing my head. The last stanza repeats the confidence found in the earlier verses 'in the Lord's own house shall I dwell for ever and ever.'

The **Second Reading** is from Paul's letter to the Ephesians. If you have time read the whole of this wonderful letter, it's only six chapters long. If Paul's letter to the Romans developed the teaching found in Galatians then this letter develops teaching found in Colossians. The letter was written while Paul was imprisoned in Rome (61-63 A.D.) and he follows what he taught in Colossians about the subordinate place of the powers of the universe by teaching that the Church as the Body of Christ embraces the whole of the new universe, 'the fullness of him who is filled, all in all.' He then deals with the continuous problem of Jew and gentile. Salvation is a gift given by God through Christ and this salvation is available equally to Jew and gentile, this shows something of the infinite wisdom of the mystery of God's inexhaustible love.

The reading, 5.8-14, tells how we should live as children of the light. If you have time read from 4.17 where Paul is speaking about our new life in Christ and he lists the behaviour that we 'as God's dear children' should avoid otherwise we will be living in darkness. Now, in contrast, our reading begins we must live our lives as children of the light trying 'to discover what the Lord wants' and we must 'take no part in the futile works of darkness' because they 'are shameful even to speak of.' The blind man in the gospel reading lives in physical and spiritual darkness but is brought into the light by Christ, this is what Paul wishes for each of us. We must 'Wake up...and Christ will shine on you.' Read if you can down to verse twenty.