

- After Jesus died on the cross, one of the soldiers, whose name was Longinus, thrust his sword into Jesus' side to ensure He was dead.
- At that moment blood and water flowed out from the wound, hitting Longinus in the face and healing him of an eye ailment. That blood and water not only healed the centurion's eyes, but also his wounded soul.
- In that moment of grace, Longinus was given a new vision – a greater capacity to see things as they truly are. His spiritual blindness melted away, and Longinus eventually became a Christian and a martyr.
- Vision – seeing – is the theme of our readings today as we come to the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent.
- In particular, we're called this Sunday to try to see things in a new light, to see as God sees. For Lent isn't simply a time for us to prepare for the upcoming Easter. It's a time for us to prepare for Heaven. It's a time to prepare ourselves for seeing God face to face.
- In our first reading from the 1<sup>st</sup> Book of Samuel, we're given the story of how David was chosen to be Israel's king over his brothers, who by their appearance would seem to be more likely candidates.
- The point made by this reading is that man's vision is often skewed and out of alignment with God's vision. We are told: "Not as man sees does God see, because man sees the appearance, but the Lord looks into the heart."
- So often we think we know the truth about a matter. We make deductions and form judgments from what we observe, but we often do so without due consideration for the fact that maybe there's more going on than meets our eye. We see only the appearance.
- It is God alone who peers into our hearts and knows all that lays there within us.
- Whether we know it or not, God is always seeing us, always peering into our heart of hearts – into our innermost depths.
- And so we must learn to be frank and honest with ourselves, especially about our faults and failings. We must be careful about indulging in judgmental, angry, or impure thoughts.
- Sadly, as St. Paul reminds us in his Letter to the Ephesians, we've all been born in darkness. He actually says: "you were once darkness", meaning that we were devoid of the light of God's sanctifying grace.
- But now – through the sanctifying power of baptism – we are in the light of the Lord. And so it is that we must live as children of light, allowing the light of God's grace to produce "every kind of goodness and righteousness and truth" within us.
- The great symbol placed before us today is the man born blind in the Gospel. He is a symbol of all of us born in the darkness of original sin. He symbolizes man's fallen state.
- What we see in this story is how Christ brings this man to the light of grace as He also heals his physical blindness.
- Yet while the blind man's physical sight is given to him immediately after he washed the clay off his eyes in the Pool of Siloam, the process of coming to a clear vision of Christ's true identity is more gradual.
- In the beginning he knows that a man called Jesus has healed his blindness, and he testifies as such. He's brought before the Pharisees, and upon the first interrogation about what's happened, he believes Jesus to be a prophet.

- But in the second interrogation, after his parents have refused to stand up for him, the man born blind tries to reason with the Pharisees – seeing the error of their logic – but they throw him out. It is then that Jesus finds the man born blind so as to heal his soul.
- And in a moment a grace, the man born blind recognizes that Jesus is Lord and worships Him. In this, the man born blind models for us how we gain a saving knowledge of Christ.
- What we learn here is that it is Christ who heals us and brings us to true sight. Yet we have to cooperate with the process through our obedience to God’s commands – just as the man born blind obediently follows Christ’s direction to wash in the Pool of Siloam.
- We prove our clear spiritual vision by being ready to witness to our beliefs, as the man born blind does before the Pharisees, and even being willing to suffer for those beliefs – just as the man born blind was thrown out of the synagogue.
- Note, too, the rather ominous statement Jesus makes at the end of the Gospel. He says: “I came into this world for judgment, so that those who do not see might see, and those who do see might become blind.”
- Here Jesus is making clear the paradox of His presence and mission. So many who were spiritually lost came to a saving knowledge of Christ by witnessing His miraculous ministry, while those who claim to have the clearest spiritual vision – the Pharisees – were revealed to be blind by their own self-inflicted darkness.
- On several occasions the light of Christ’s being revealed the proud darkness in the hearts of the Pharisees, and in their pride, they could not humble themselves to accept Christ as Lord when He exposed them for being spiritual frauds, as He does in this Gospel story.
- Today’s readings call us to look at the areas of our life that need healing and light, and to ask this of Jesus. The question we must ask ourselves is where do we align?
- Are we humble enough, like the man born blind, to accept God’s grace? Or are we more like the Pharisees, holding on to our sins and spiritual blindness because of pride or spiritual tepidity?
- At the end of our 2<sup>nd</sup> reading, St. Paul quotes what’s likely an ancient Christian hymn, saying: “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.”
- The point here is that the healing light of Christ is available to us all. Christ desires to give this to us. But we must strive to be humble and obedient to God’s commands, we must be willing to proclaim Christ for Who He Is: our Savior and Redeemer.
- My brothers and sisters, we are more than halfway through the darkness of Lent. In just three weeks the full light of Christ will break upon us as we celebrate His resurrection.
- Thus, now is the time for us to free ourselves from the darkness of any grave sins that have held us in bondage. Now is the time to heed the command of Ash Wednesday to repent and be faithful to the Gospel – to live in the light of the Lord.
- It’s also the time for us to have absolute faith in God’s power and goodness.
- As we strive to see things as God sees, and not as man sees, let us rejoice and give thanks to our Lord, Who loves us so much and wants to share with us the light of His grace.
- And let us trust that, with God’s grace, we can be healed of whatever darkness or blindness that afflicts us and brought into the fullness of God’s light. Let us pray that God may not only heal our bodies, but that He heal our hearts and souls.
- St. Longinus, pray for us!