

SPIRITUAL LIFE

Fourth Sunday of Lent

By: Fr. Greg Ames

Maggie is an elephant at the zoo in Anchorage Alaska. Actually, she is the only elephant there. She plays the harmonica; she paints water colors. Most people who see her at the zoo wind up asking, why is an elephant in this zoo? The weather in Alaska allows very little time for Maggie to get outside and get the exercise she needs. Maggie tips the scales at 9000 pounds; to help her get exercise they are actually building an elephant treadmill. People from other zoos find this appalling and that she should be moved to a zoo in a warmer climate. The trouble is she has not been socialized with other elephants, and is not the friendliest elephant in the world. A zoo director from San Diego, *A lone elephant is not a good thing. The fact that she's without elephant companionship; we shouldn't fool ourselves that somehow humans are the equivalent.*

For a second week, we encounter a person who stands alone. The man born blind, like the woman at the well, is the 9000 pound elephant in the room. Everyone sees him. What he needs is not a treadmill or even a harmonic. Like the woman at the well, he needs human companionship, the touch of others who say your life is important. In that moment of alones, Jesus comes to him. On the Second Sunday of Lent, the voice from the heavens said, "This is my son, listen to him." And so we do:

Neither he nor his parents sinned Jesus lives in a time when people believed that illness, disability, misfortune were punishments from God. If you had problems, either you or someone on your family tree, did something that caused this. Jesus enters the conversation and says these things have nothing to do with sin. In fact, the conversation is blinding them from what sin really is. It is a choice you make. Very often people will come to confession, confess a sin, and then add a "but" on the end of it. It is almost as if they might not be responsible for what they just said if the special circumstances were explained. That is where Jesus says we are blind. There are no buts, however, special circumstances. We lie; we hurt people, we are thoughtless; we are unfaithful, we think only of our-

selves. Healing begins when we take responsibility for our sins. It is not about saying you are a terrible person, as it is realizing you need forgiveness.

Go wash Two very simple, but powerful words. Go wash. Do you realize that Christianity is the only world religion that teaches forgiveness for every sin is possible? With God, once you realize your need for forgiveness, once you understand the lessons you have learned, it's over. With God, it's over. Of course living with one another, reconciling with each other, that takes time and is hard. But once you come to God, and you realize it is over, you get this grace, this power, the strength, to deal with even the tough stuff. You get the courage to be, as Paul tells the Ephesians, a person who lives in the light.

Do you believe I was in Chicago this week, and visited the Art Institution of Chicago. There were high school students there. They were going from picture to picture, with these papers trying to fill our questions about each piece. I felt badly for them; I think that got set up. Instead of really looking at the pictures, they were enslaved by filling out the forms. I stood in front of a Degas, as a young girl came quickly to look at it and start writing. The first question was "What are your thoughts about the painting." Bust and a lot of color. She filled in a few more things and moved on. And so do we. For many of us, life is just busy and a lot of color. We do not take the time to look, notice and see; really see. And that is where we sin. We are moving on, and fail to see the hurt look in someone's face; the loneliness in someone else; the poor and the disadvantaged. We need the grace and the courage of Samuel, who if he not look carefully, would have not seen that David was meant to be the king; he would have written David off as busy and a lot of color. Jesus asks, do you believe? It seems like such a simple question. The challenge for each of us is to realize that in that moment he is asking us, how willing are you really to see?

READINGS OF THE WEEK

1 Samuel 16:1-13 Ephesians 5:8-14 John 9:1-41

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光明的沉思

修院生活中，經常會遇到不少青年，他們年輕有為、人品好、有學識、有事業、甚至有異性朋友；他們熱心公益、積極進取，是堂區團體內的中堅分子；他們又是家庭生活支柱，為父母引以為傲。他們受人羨慕，連自己也同意是被上主所祝福的。

但當他們在生命的某時刻，受基督慷慨的大愛所觸動時，以往自以為滿意的生活竟然動搖起來，對過去的美好，他們會問：「我可以更好嗎？」他們的生命被基督「光照再光照」，在光明中引導去「更光明處」。但在步向「更光明處」的過程中，卻帶來衝擊、焦慮、迷惘，甚至被誤解，他們重新檢視從前所建立的，再去肯定自己，把自己生命的方向重新定位。

真的，這是否「自尋煩惱」？若果不讓基督找著，又或對祂的召叫和光照置之不理，仍留在舊有的「美好」當中，這樣不是會平安一點嗎？

今天的福音使人感動，一位胎生的瞎子被耶穌醫治後，有勇氣站出來，見證他重見光明的事實，甚至不惜與法利塞人爭辯，最後被人驅逐，連他的親生父母也不願替他出頭。

就在這孤立無援之際，在他生命處於另一個黑夜、無處容身時，耶穌再次出現，給他光明和希望。這次不是給他視力上的看見，就是讓他看到「人子」，使他從心底裡宣信說：「主啊，我信！」繼而朝拜耶穌，明認他是天主。若望在此指出耶穌就是照世的真光，為審判而來到世上「使瞎子能夠看見；使看見的，反而成了瞎子。」復明的瞎子和失明的法利塞人，真的給我們最好的寫照。

四旬期第四主日，傳統上教會為候洗者舉行第二次考核禮，甲年讀經更特別是為這禮儀而設的。胎生瞎子是指當人未曾接受福音喜訊時，不知人生的終向、更不明白自己與神、與別人、甚至與自己的關係，這境況可形容為在黑暗中浮沉和摸索。

當候洗者與基督相遇，生命給光照後，他們找到希望和方向時，就好像福音中的瞎子得到光明，他們是興奮和喜樂的，這令他們甘願拋棄過往相反福音的習性，勇敢地站出來，為自己的新生作見證，為真理辯護。就像聖保祿宗徒在今天的書信所說的：「弟兄們：你們原是黑暗，可是現在欲在主內成了光明，因此你們生活行事，該像光明的兒女。光明所結的果實就是：良善、正義和真理」。故此，整個教會在這時刻為候洗者祈禱，求天主把他們從四周的黑暗錯謬中解救出來，堅定不移的服從真理，並生活在光明中。

要成為真正天主的子女，不能獨善其身，只求修成正果為一己滿足，而要讓別人也能分享救恩的喜樂，甚至要有把世界改變過來的勇氣、要有對抗黑暗的膽量。這就是保祿宗徒在書信中說的：「別人在黑暗中所做的無益的事，你們不要參與，反而要加以譴責」。信徒不單不去參與無益的事，更要加以譴責它。

作基督徒不是叫我們只有「出世」的精神、看破一切塵世事；而是看通一切，把世界從沉睡中喚醒過來「你這沉睡的人，醒來吧！從死者中起來，基督要光照你！」在福音中那位復明的胎生瞎子與法利塞人抗辯，維護在安息日開他眼睛的那位是「先知」、是「來自天主」。過程中他受孤立、遭誤解，就連父母親也不敢與他站在一起，朋友也不想與他往來，相信為他是非常難受的；但是他從哪裡得來的力量和骨氣與法利塞人爭持呢？

就是因為他已經找到生命的根源——耶穌基督。就是這個發現使他判若兩人，因為他已不再處於黑暗中，他身處光明，願意為光作證。

禱文：主耶穌基督，你是出自光明的光明，出自真天主的真天主，求你光照我們的心靈，光照我們的隱私，使我們在沉睡中甦醒過來，與候洗者一起，以莫大的勇氣以你的光明成己成人。亞孟。

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