

There is a common saying that the eyes are the window to the soul. We tend to believe that by looking at someone—by observing their face, their expression, their demeanor—we can understand the kind of person they are. But the Scriptures today challenge that assumption.

In the first reading the Lord tells the prophet Samuel: “Not as man sees does God see, because man sees the appearance but the Lord looks into the heart.” Literally, the Hebrew text says that man sees with the eyes, but God sees the heart. When Samuel sees Jesse’s eldest son Eliab, he immediately thinks, “Surely this must be the Lord’s anointed.” Eliab looks the part—strong, impressive, kingly. But God corrects Samuel. “Do not judge from his appearance or from his lofty stature.” One by one the sons of Jesse pass before Samuel, and one by one God rejects them. Finally, Samuel asks if there are any sons left. Jesse replies that the youngest is out in the fields tending sheep. David wasn’t even considered important enough to be invited to the sacrifice. Yet this overlooked shepherd boy is the one God chooses. Why? Because God sees what human eyes cannot see. God sees the heart. David will become the greatest king in the history of Israel. It is from the House of David that Jesus Christ will be born.

The Scriptures teach us that the heart is the hidden center of the person—the place where our intentions, our desires, our wounds, and our love originate. Much of what shapes our lives is hidden deep within the heart. Often those things are hidden even from ourselves. We may think we understand

our motives, but sometimes they are mixed. We may carry wounds from past disappointments or failures that influence how we treat others. We may judge another person quickly without knowing anything about the struggles they carry within their heart.

The heart is also where we encounter God most intimately, with our raw, true self. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states: “According to Scripture, it is the heart that prays. If our heart is far from God, the words of prayer are in vain.” (CCC 2562) Prayer is not just something we say with our lips. True prayer comes from the heart. And that is why Lent is such an important season. Lent invites us to ask God to purify our hearts—to reveal what is hidden within us and to heal it.

Sometimes we need to ask God to show us our own hearts more clearly. And sometimes we need to ask God for another grace as well: the grace to see others the way He sees them. If we could see people the way God sees them—if we could glimpse their lost hopes and dreams, their disappointments, their wounds from past hurts—we might be slower to judge them and quicker to show mercy. Adopting God’s vision means learning to look beyond appearances and to recognize the dignity and complexity of every human heart.

We need help to see clearly. In the Gospel, Jesus declares: “I am the light of the world.”

At first glance today's healing of the man born blind seems to be about a physical healing—and it certainly is. Jesus restores the man's sight. But the miracle points to something deeper. The man's physical sight is only the beginning. What matters even more is the growth of his spiritual vision. Notice how his understanding of Jesus develops over time. At first he simply reports what happened: "He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and now I can see." Then, when he is pressed further, he says something more: "He is a prophet." His understanding is growing. And finally, when Jesus finds him again and reveals his identity, the man makes the ultimate confession of faith: "I do believe, Lord." And he worships him. His physical eyes were opened, but more importantly the eyes of his heart were opened.

Meanwhile, the Pharisees—those who should have been the religious guides of the people—remain spiritually blind. They see the miracle. They hear the testimony of the healed man. Yet their hearts remain closed. Instead of allowing the light of Christ to reveal the truth, they cling to their own assumptions. And in the end they drive the healed man away. The irony is striking: the one who was born blind now sees clearly, while those who claim to see remain in darkness. This Gospel reminds us that spiritual vision is a gift of grace. We need the light of Christ to see ourselves clearly. We need the light of Christ to see others with compassion. And we need the light of Christ to recognize who He truly is.

Saint Paul captures this beautifully in today's reading from the Letter to the Ephesians: "You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light." That is the invitation of Lent. To step out of darkness. To allow Christ to illuminate our hearts. To see more clearly—with God's vision rather than our own. And so perhaps our prayer this week can be very simple: Lord, open the eyes of my heart. Help me see myself with honesty. Help me see others with mercy. And help me see you more clearly, the true light of the world. Because when Christ opens our eyes, everything begins to look different.

And when we learn to see with His light, we begin to live as children of the light—no longer defined by darkness, but by the truth, mercy, and hope that Christ places within our hearts, a hope we cannot keep to ourselves but must share so that others may come to know Him. And when that hope is shared, it not only changes the world—it fills our own hearts with lasting joy and peace.