

March 15, 2026—Fourth Sunday of Lent—Laetare Sunday

The Prophet Samuel was a holy and wise man; no doubt, he was also a good judge of character. The first king of the Jews, Saul, was proving to be unfaithful, so God sent Samuel to the house of Jesse to anoint the next king from among Jesse's sons. The eldest son was handsome and strong and seemed to be a natural leader. Even so, this was not to be the next king. God told Samuel: **“Do not judge from his appearance or from his lofty stature, because I have rejected him. Not as man sees does God see, because man sees the appearance, but the Lord sees into the heart.”** It was the youngest son, David, that God chose to be the next king and he would become the model king of the Old Testament.

“Man sees the appearance.” It reminds us that we must be careful about judging others. When Jesus told us to stop judging, He meant that we should not judge the state of a person's soul, for only God, who **“sees into the heart,”** knows that. We often do need to judge the actions of a person and assess their character, for example, who your children play with or who you hire for a job. Also, we should be careful about attributing motives to others unless they reveal their motives to us. It seems like social media is all about judging people and their motives. As AI advances, appearances will become more deceptive. We sometimes accuse God of not caring when we have problems and sufferings of life; we should talk to Him in prayer about them, but can't we agree that God knows what He is doing! He is the Almighty! We only see the appearance of things, after all!

Light is the theme for the Scripture readings this Sunday. Light is one of those words that has multiple meanings and it has a deep spiritual meaning in the Sacred Scripture.

Often light is contrasted with darkness but they are never equal; light is more powerful and will prevail. Even the light of single candle will dispel the darkness of a large room. Light stands for God and for what is good and true, while darkness stands for what is evil and false. At the Easter Vigil, light is a beautiful symbol of the power of Christ's light that He brought to the world by His death and resurrection. That night we turn out all the lights in the Church and weather permitting, we begin outside. We bless and light the new Easter candle, which is a symbol of Christ, the light of the world. All those present hold small candles and one by one as they pass through the Church doors receive their light from the Easter candle. As they go back to their places all those individual candles fill the darkened Church with light.

In the Second Reading, St. Paul wrote, **“You were once in darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light, for light produces every kind of goodness and righteousness and truth.”** Through sanctifying grace, God has put His light and His very life into our souls.

Light also signifies understanding something. When I was child, cartoons used to have a light bulb appear over the head of a character when they got an idea. God enlightened Samuel in the choice of the future king, David.

We are able to see with our eyes because light from the outside can penetrate our eyes and register images on the brain. By the way, the human eye is very complicated and could never have evolved from something lesser. Every aspect must be intact from the beginning for the eye to function. In the Gospel, Jesus healed the man who was blind from birth. The Gospel emphasizes that the man was blind from birth, he had never seen anything in his life. Although Jesus worked the miracle to restore sight to him out of His compassionate Heart, the man is also a symbol for something more. He stands for mankind which lost the light of grace from the time of Adam. Spiritually, Original Sin, blinded us.

There was no possible cure for the loss of sanctifying grace, except by the intervention of God, Himself. Just as the man blind from birth needed Jesus to give Him sight, we need Jesus and the great Sacrament of Baptism, to give us spiritual sight. In the Old Testament, God warns Israel about the evil of putting a stumbling block in the way of a blind man; what a heartless thing to do! If we stumble because of the stumbling block of sin, Jesus calls us to repentance and the restoration of our sight through the Sacrament of Confession.

The Gospel continues with the interrogation of the formerly blind man by the Pharisees. They don't believe the man was truly blind and even bring in his parents to testify. They cannot disprove the miracle, but still they will not believe their own eyes, that a man blind from birth could now see through the miracle that Jesus wrought. At the end, all they could do was throw him out of the synagogue.

Jesus later met the formerly blind man, who so beautifully expressed his faith in Jesus, saying, **“I do believe, Lord, and he worshipped Him.”** Jesus responded with the moral, **“I came into this world for judgment, so that those who do not see might see, and those who do see might become blind.”** The Pharisees who overheard His words, thought that they had perfect eyesight and perfect insight, asked **“Surely we are not also blind, are we?”** They had physical sight, but they

were blind to the working of God through Jesus. Lord, I do believe, heal my unbelief.