

Reflection for the 4th Sunday of Lent (March 30-31, 2019)

This week-end's Scripture readings speak about sight, and seeing, as well as the failure to see.

The First Reading from Samuel points out that God does not see in the same way we do, based on appearances. He sees into our hearts, our **true** selves, not the image that we project or that we project onto others. In the reading, it almost seems as if David was invisible to his father - when Jesse was asked to bring forth his sons, it was only after prompting that he remembered David, the youngest, who was off tending the sheep. As the youngest, what could he possibly have to offer compared to his older brothers? However, God saw something special in David that no one else seemed to perceive.

Have you ever felt that way yourself - that people don't see the whole you and have slotted you into one particular role? If you've ever been pigeon-holed at work, it can be hard to break out of that mold that others have made for you. It can be incredibly frustrating because you know you have more to offer. Sometimes the only solution is to change jobs, or do something out of "character", before your full dimensions come to be seen.

In the Gospel, some of the community and the religious authorities were so locked into their points of view, that they refused to believe that the blind man was able to see, despite all the evidence to the contrary. They discounted his own testimony and were reluctant to believe even that of his parents and neighbours who knew him. How ironic that they justified their own blindness by arguing about the sight of a man who had been blind but was no longer. It was easier for them to just invalidate the source of all this trouble - Jesus - than to have to shake up their firmly-held points of view about worthiness, godliness and right and wrong.

When I view the world, my first perspective is as a white, Canadian born woman of English/Irish heritage who is middle-class, married with grown children and Catholic. In a way, I can't help but see things through this lens because that is who I am. But change any one of those characteristics and it necessarily changes the perspective, the lens. If you were to substitute Syrian born for Canadian born, how different would my life experience be and how different then the way I would view the world. I might be newly arrived in Canada and wondering if I can adapt to so many new things and if will I ever see my family and homeland again. And I wonder how differently you might see me.

Since we can't help who we are, how might we, if we are willing, improve our vision, broaden the lens through which we see? Pope Francis says we can start to do this through a culture of encounter. It is through meeting and interacting with people different from ourselves and by walking in another's shoes that we can see another's reality, who someone **actually** is, not just what we have been conditioned to see.

How can we do this? It will likely entail deliberate action on our part to share in the journey of another and see another reality.

Here at St. Joe's, members of the Reflections ministry each bring their own perspective to the readings when we offer the reflection each week. We are male and female, young and not-so-young, gay and straight, educators, health care providers, lawyers, parents, clergy and retired public servants.

An alternative lens I often look through and draw on when preparing a reflection is as a member of Development and Peace - Caritas Canada. That's the international solidarity and social justice organization of the Canadian Catholic church. I look on Development and Peace as an alternative pair of glasses that the bishops of Canada created for us over 50 years ago.

In 2008, when I had just retired, I went on an exposure trip with Development and Peace to Ecuador. It offered me a different perspective and changed many of my points of view. I travelled with fellow Development and Peace members and we met many of the partner groups of Development and Peace as well as the people they served, mostly indigenous Kichwa women and men who lived in the high Andes. We learned about their lives and struggles, met some of their families, saw their homes and their farms – much different from those here in Canada. I also encountered for the first time another interpretation of the history of the Americas than the one I had been brought up with. I learned about the greed, brutality, discrimination and yes, blindness that was part of bringing so-called civilization and Christianity to the so-called New World.

I haven't looked at things the same way since and it has influenced how I view our own colonial past and present here in Canada.

I humbly offer Development and Peace to **you** as a possible way to share in the journey of another and see another perspective.

You may have seen the posters or read the bulletin announcements that the emphasis of the Share Lent campaign this year is sharing in the journey of involuntary migrants. This is the theme that Pope Francis himself asked us to focus on as part of a global campaign within the world-wide Caritas family. It offers the opportunity to see things through a different lens by accompanying the 68.5 million men, women and children who have been forced to flee their homes through no fault of their own.

Development and Peace offers many ways you can share in this journey with them. Some of you have already participated in the Way of the Cross after the 11:30 Mass which continues until the end of Lent. In it, we journey with Jesus towards Calvary through the lens of people who have had to flee their homes because of war, persecution, poverty or environmental or natural disasters.

You can also read the stories in our magazine and other materials of some of the forced migrants that Development and Peace helps to support, through your contributions. You can participate in an **actual** journey by joining local members and supporters on the solidarity walk

next Saturday throughout downtown Ottawa and Gatineau. You can become a member of Development and Peace.

And since next Sunday – the 5th Sunday of Lent – is Solidarity Sunday - the once a year collection in all parishes across Canada for the work of Development and Peace, you might feel inspired to make a contribution next week-end that will enable Development and Peace's work to continue and thrive.

Our readings today are a good reminder for us, as we journey together through the dark days of Lent towards Good Friday and the light of the Easter, that while everyone of us is on a journey together, we may not always see those who travel the road with us. Development and Peace can be one way that helps us to see this more clearly.