

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

LECTIONARY #31

READING I 1 Samuel 16:1b, 6–7, 10–13a

A reading from the first Book of Samuel

The LORD said to Samuel:

“Fill your horn with oil, and be on your way.

I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem,

for I have chosen my king from among his sons.”

As Jesse and his sons came to the sacrifice,

Samuel looked at Eliab and thought,

“Surely the LORD’s anointed is here before him.”

But the LORD said to 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 looks into the heart.”

In the same way Jesse presented seven sons before Samuel,

but Samuel said to Jesse,

“The LORD has not chosen any one of these.”

Then Samuel asked Jesse,

“Are these all the sons you have?”

Jesse replied,

“There is still the youngest, who is tending the sheep.”

Samuel said to Jesse,

“Send for him;

we will not begin the sacrificial banquet until he arrives here.”

Proclaim in a tone of authority.

Jesse = JES-ee

Read with clarity and purpose.

Eliab = ee-LĪ-uhb

Pause before you say this line.

Use an informative tone.

Remember to use vocal variety and articulation as you proclaim the conversation between Samuel and Jesse.

READING I When the Lord commands Samuel to go to Jesse of Bethlehem to anoint one of his sons king, Samuel is afraid, and asks God, “How can I go? Saul will hear of it and kill me.” Even though the Lord had rejected Saul, he remains a powerful king, able to gather military forces and track down those he suspected of treachery. To keep Saul from realizing what Samuel is about to do, the Lord directs Samuel to offer a sacrifice where the elders of Bethlehem, along with Jesse, would join him at a sacrificial banquet.

Obedient to the Lord’s command, Samuel meets Jesse and his sons at the sacrifice. As Samuel sees the first son, Eliab, he thinks that he must be the one chosen by the Lord. Consecrated by a ritual of pouring oil from a ram’s horn on his head, the future king would thereafter be known as “the Lord’s anointed.” Like Saul, Eliab has the look of a king, both men being tall. Yet the Lord, who does not judge by appearance, rejects Eliab, just as he had rejected Saul.

One by one, Jesse presents seven sons before Samuel. Seemingly puzzled,

Samuel asks Jesse, “Are these all the sons you have?” Since the number seven symbolized completeness, Jesse’s seven sons would seem to be the total number. (In a different tradition, 1 Chronicles 2:13–15, names David as the seventh and youngest son of Jesse.) Jesse then acknowledges that he has an eighth son, without naming him, as if he had forgotten him, so far away tending the sheep. Speaking with prophetic authority, Samuel commands Jesse to send for his youngest son, even announcing that the sacrificial banquet would be postponed until his arrival.

Make your voice strong as you finish the reading.

Jesse sent and had the young man brought to them.
He was **ruddy**, a youth **handsome** to behold
and making a splendid appearance.
The LORD said,
"There—anooint him, for this is the **one!**"
Then Samuel, with the horn of **oil** in hand,
anoointed David in the presence of his brothers;
and from that day on, the spirit of the LORD rushed
upon David.

For meditation and context:

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 23:1–3a, 3b–4, 5, 6 (1)

R. The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

In verdant pastures he gives me repose;
beside restful waters he leads me;
he refreshes my soul.

He guides me in right paths
for his name's sake.

Even though I walk in the dark valley
I fear no evil; for you are at my side
with your rod and your staff
that give me courage.

You spread the table before me
in the sight of my foes;
you anooint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

Only goodness and kindness follow me
all the days of my life;

and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD
for years to come.

READING II Ephesians 5:8–14

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Ephesians

Brothers and sisters:

You were once 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.

Try to **learn** what is pleasing to the Lord. »

Ephesians = ee-FEE-shuhnz

Proclaim with a tone of happiness now that
"you are light in the Lord."

When the young man is finally brought before Samuel, the prophet responds immediately to God's command, "There—anooint him, for this is the one!" The anointing of the young David is part of the biblical motif of God's choice of the younger over the elder, beginning with the choice of Abel over Cain, and Jacob over Esau. Being anointed in the presence of his brothers is a sign that the youngest has again taken precedence over the elder. From the moment of his anointing, the spirit of the Lord was with David, signifying God's presence and power with him.

This episode begins the long saga of David's rise to power and of his kingship. Even with his well-known sins and limitations, David was remembered as the ideal king, called God's servant, and God's son, who kept the Lord's statutes and commandments. The Lord who looks into the heart, rather than to the outward appearance, found in David "a man after his own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14).

READING II In the Letter to the Ephesians, Paul, or someone writing in his name, presents teaching and

exhortations that are applicable to all of the baptized. While most of his letters address specific situations of a local church, Ephesians seems to have a more universal audience. Many features of the letter have led some commentators to think that it may have been an early encyclical, with copies sent to various churches, of which Ephesus was the first. Today's reading is a good example of instruction given to those of any community who are "faithful in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 1:1), both in Paul's day and in our own.

"Do not live in darkness," St. Paul tells us. Use a tone of informing.

Pause before you say this last line. Read with intensity.

Proclaim with an informative tone.

Rabbi = RAB-Ī

Pause before you give Jesus' answer. Use a tone of authority.

saliva = suh-LĪ-vuh

Siloam = sih-LOH-uhm

During this conversation, use vocal variety and take your time.

Take **no** part in the **fruitless** works of **darkness**; rather expose them, for it is **shameful** even to mention the things **done** by them in secret; but everything **exposed** by the **light** becomes visible, for everything that becomes visible is light.

Therefore, it says:

"**Awake**, O sleeper,
and arise from the **dead**,
and **Christ** will **give** you light."

GOSPEL John 9:1-41

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

[As Jesus passed by he saw a man blind from birth.]

His disciples asked him,

"Rabbi, **who sinned**, this man or **his** parents,
that he was born **blind**?"

Jesus answered,

"**Neither he** nor his parents sinned;
it is **so** that the **works** of God might be made visible
through him.

We have to **do** the works of the **one** who sent **me** while it is day.
Night is coming when **no one** can work.

While I am **in** the world, I am the light of the **world**."

When he had said this, [he spat on the ground

and made clay with the **saliva**,

and smeared the clay on his eyes, and said to him,

"**Go wash** in the **Pool of Siloam**"—which means Sent—

So he went and **washed**, and came back **able** to see.

His neighbors and those who had seen him earlier
as a **beggar** said,

"Isn't **this** the **one** who used to sit and **beg**?"

The imagery in this reading draws on biblical tradition as well as common human experience. Light and darkness in the Bible, other literature, and human thought is symbolic of day and night, of good and evil, of knowledge and ignorance, of divine and demonic. Paul's use of the darkness and light metaphor resonates particularly with the creation account in Genesis, when the darkness that covered the abyss is transformed to light at God's command. Those who are "light in the Lord" are also transformed, created anew, as Paul says else-

where, "Whoever is in Christ is a new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Having been created anew, the baptized are to "live as children of light." The verb Paul uses here (*peripateite*) means "walk," not as a momentary or temporary action, but as a continuous process. The verb in the Bible describes an ongoing way of life, as in God's command to Abram, "Walk in my presence and be blameless" (Genesis 17:1). Similarly, Paul exhorts the Ephesians and the whole church to walk in the light, radiating every kind of goodness, righteousness, and truth. Not intended as

an exhaustive list of what it means to live in the light, these three virtues are representative of a way of life for the faithful. Even though they have already received the light of Christ, they must continue to learn how to walk in the light and do what is pleasing to the Lord.

Having first described the deeds of light, Paul then exhorts his audience to stay away from works of darkness. Because they walk in the light, they unmask darkness by casting light into secret and shadowy places. When Paul tells them to take no part in works of darkness, he is advising