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“As Jesus passed by he saw a man blind from birth” (John 9:1).

Fourth Sunday of Lent

1 Sam 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a; Eph 5:8-14; John 9:1-41

Today's Gospel is a Creation story. In the Book of Signs, the core of the fourth Gospel, the author offers a series of events that end with Jesus declaring that he is I AM, the divine name. As God was revealed in salvation history, so Jesus is revealed as the Bridegroom, Living Water, Light of the World, Bread from heaven, the Good Shepherd, the Lamb of God and, finally, the Resurrections and the Life.

Adam was fashioned from earth, moisture and breath. So, the blind man is also fashioned anew. “Let there be light.” He sees for the first time and becomes a witness to God's presence and power in Jesus. At the end of the story, he is brought face to face with Jesus. Creation occurred when the Spirit hovered over the face of the earth, and so is the blind man welcomed into the light by seeing the image and likeness of God.

This powerful theological story is also a controversy story that contrasts the sight faith gives to the blindness of Jesus' opponents, who are determined to reject him. The miracle is so decisive the Pharisees even threaten the man's parents and expel the former blind man from the synagogue rather than acknowledge that Jesus derives his power from the Creator.

Not to believe is to live in darkness, to stumble through life making poor decisions and being unprepared for crises. The familiar prayer of the Christophers, “It is better to light a single candle than to curse the darkness,” speaks to the blindness of our own times. How many prophets, from Pope Francis to Greta Thunberg and countless scientists, have sounded the alarm to halt the plundering of our own planet, to stop sacrificing the common good for short-term gain for the few that threatens the whole human family.

The Fourth Sunday of Lent gathers us in spirit to pray for an end to the pandemic and for the healing of a wounded world slow to learn that injustice is the underlying condition for so many of our problems.

If every prayer were a candle, it would light the world and show the way forward. But light is useless if we do not see as well. So, we also ask for insight and courage to

see others as our brothers and sisters and to act as we can to help one another through this challenge.

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