

**“For the Lord sees not as man sees.”**

***1 Sam 16:7***

For many people today, life is shaped by a series of questions about lifestyle choices: what patterns of behaviour should I follow, and what long-term or day-to-day decisions should I make – with regard to health and diet, career, family, finances, and so forth – to help me lead a happy and fulfilled life? The central pillar in decisions about a lifestyle choice is the self: Me. What do I want? What is my truth? What do I think would help me to live my best life? But all the decisions that follow on from my preferred lifestyle choices are add-ons: they are not an essential part of me, and they can be changed whenever it suits my whim or fancy.

Practising the Catholic Faith is different. Living life as a Catholic is not a lifestyle choice. Oh, certainly there are many Catholics for whom religion is a mere add-on to the other events and preoccupations of a busy life: whether I go to church on such-and-such a day is a matter of convenience or inclination or personal preference. But to become a disciple of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and to live a life in fidelity to the truths He has revealed through His Church, involves something quite different.

It is not that Catholics live lives that are the same as everyone else’s but with a bit of religion tacked on. For a faithful Catholic, it is not about seeing the world as everyone else sees it but with a few different opinions. It is not even about seeing laws and social trends, and even society itself, from a different angle. No. To be a faithful Catholic means be willing to adopt an *entirely different mindset* from everyone else. It means adopting an altogether different world view. It means absorbing – or allowing oneself to be absorbed into – an altogether different reality. A faithful Catholic sees the world differently, thinks differently, reacts differently, and prioritizes differently. A faithful Catholic is aiming at

something different and is heading somewhere quite different. And what's more, the life of a faithful Catholic is ordered along quite different lines from everyone else because it is ordered towards heaven.

What matters most for a faithful Catholic is the state of his soul, and the state of the souls of those for whom he cares. In short, the mindset of a faithful Catholic is to try to see everything from God's point of view, and then to act on what he sees both in terms of his relationship with God, and with his neighbour, and with the good ordering of his life generally.

All of today's readings say exactly this, although they put it in terms of light and of seeing. The choice of the shepherd boy David, to become the next King of Israel, is based not on how others see him, or on how he measures up to society's expectations, but on how God sees him. St Paul, in the Second Reading, tells us no longer to walk as if we still lived how we used to live before we became disciples of Our Lord: 'Walk as children of the light,' he says. 'Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness... [but] try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.' Not just on Sunday morning, but try to make 'pleasing to the Lord' your priority every minute of every day.

And in today's Gospel we see most starkly the great divide – the chasm – between those who see and those who do not see. The paradoxes are clear: the blind man sees but those with sight are blind. The two sets of people – the man born blind on the one hand and the Pharisees on the other – occupy two completely different mindsets. They do not just see the circumstances differently, or from a different point of view, from each other. They do not just occupy different standpoints. It is not just that they disagree with the other person: they simply cannot even understand what the other person is saying. They live in different worlds.

And that's the point. The faithful Catholics of today need to live in a different world from those around them who do not believe. I do not mean that they should disengage from their non-believing neighbour, or should ignore his needs, or consider himself separate from – and most certainly not superior to – his neighbour. What I mean is that faithful Catholics should so steep themselves in the presence of God, and in the things of God, that they can actually begin to see all the concerns of the world from a supernatural perspective instead of from a human perspective; that they should be able to see things from above, as God sees them, instead of from below without even bothering to look up, as is the case with most ordinary folk.

It is not so much that the man born blind can now see: rather, it is that he has entered into an altogether different world which previously he hadn't even known existed.

'Do you believe in the Son of Man?' asked Our Lord. 'He answered, And who is He, sir, that I may believe in Him? Jesus said to him, You have seen Him, and it is He who is speaking to you. He said, Lord, I believe, and he worshipped Him.'