

Fourth Sunday of Lent

March 21-22, 2020

Homily Helps

Reading 1 (1 Samuel 16:1B, 6-7, 10-13A)

Man looks at the appearance of others, but the Lord looks into the heart. David was chosen, anointed, and the Spirit rushed upon him. The human person has great dignity in the image of God, but pornography invites us to only see the outer person rather than the full person. Screens cheapen the goodness of sex, making it seem that we are to be selfish rather than giving, looking at images rather than beholding the deeper person.

Responsorial Psalm (Psalm 23: 1-3A, 3B-4, 5, 6)

The Lord, who is our shepherd, gives us pasture, water, and refreshment to our souls. He directs us and keeps us safe. We are protected and provided for in the house of the Lord. Our homes are to be safe havens where we proactively filter what comes in and goes out, which includes TVs, smartphones, and other internet-enabled devices.

Reading 2 (Ephesians 5:8-14)

We were once in darkness but now are light in the Lord and are to live in the light. We are to learn what is pleasing to the Lord and to avoid the fruitless works of darkness, even to expose them. Pornography is easier to access now more than ever before due to the internet. Thus, children are exposed to it even without trying. We must respond by preventing and removing these works of darkness from our devices.

Gospel (John 9: 1-41)

Jesus heals the blind man to make visible the works of God. Jesus is the light of the world, and the man who can now see gives testimony of what Jesus has done. The Pharisees do not receive the work of Jesus as from God. It is important to have conversations with our children where they can share what they experience. Let them share and do not reject them or react strongly. Let them share about their interests, temptations, enjoyment, so that you can accept them and help them. God loves us right where we are and too much to leave us there.

Homily Sample

The disciples began with a question: “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind?” The answer of Jesus is remarkable: “Neither he nor his parents sinned; it is so that the works of God might be made visible through him.” Then Jesus proceeds to establish this man’s vision, allowing for this man to see for the first time in his life.

Imagine! It wasn’t that he saw for a while, then lost his vision, and now he’s glad to have it back. He never saw anything in his entire life! We can’t even imagine this!! Jesus said that this was all to take place so that the works of God might be made visible through him. So, this healing wasn’t just for the man to be able to see, but for everyone to see that God is at work in the ministry of Jesus.

We know that we have been enlightened by the Lord as well. In baptism, we are given the gift of faith, sometimes called the light of faith. Our minds are opened to receive God’s word. This is necessary because our intellects have otherwise been darkened due to original sin. There is great need of light for us to make good decisions and to understand the truth of things.

As we mark Safe Haven Sunday, we want to highlight the gifts of family, relationships, human sexuality, and human dignity. We want to discuss the ways in which our homes can become more and more homes of light, warmth, truth, love, and holiness. In a particular way, it is important to speak clearly about the reality of pornography in the world.

Pornography is not to be considered a neutral topic, as if it may or may not be a problem. With the advent of the internet, and the mobility of data and smartphones and tablets, pornography has quickly accelerated into a multi-billion-dollar industry annually.

It is important for us to recognize that pornography is a grave matter, and it's not a matter for some other family, it's a matter that every family should take seriously. If we are to live in the light, we must address the dangers of pornography. We heard Saint Paul in today's reading say: "Try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the fruitless works of darkness; rather, expose them." Pornography robs us of many things which we are meant to experience with regard to our human sexuality and relationships. I want to touch upon four items: It robs us of (1) givenness, (2) life, (3) pleasure, and (4) oneness:

1. Pornography teaches us to use others rather than to see them as gifts given.
2. Pornography divides our understanding that sexuality is to be united to marriage and the gift of children.
3. Pornography desensitizes us to the pleasure of being with another, having given the brain an unnatural high.
4. Finally, pornography robs us of the understanding of being united to another; instead we desire to be united to an image.

To travel the road of pornography means to travel down a road toward darkness, which is the opposite of the ministry of Jesus. Saint Paul again says: "You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord."

Brothers and sisters, Jesus wants to bring light into our lives, to our families and to our homes. He wants to come, as he did to the man born blind, to establish sight. He wants to bring us from blindness to clear vision. Today marks a day for us who want to live in the light in all aspects of our lives. We begin by asking Jesus to come to our homes, to make them safe havens, that the works of God might be made visible among us.