**“God’s Plan for Us”**

All our readings point us to God’s plan for us. Have you wondered why God created us differently? Have you reflected on why every one of us have distinct DNA? It is all in God’s plan. While it is impossible to fully know what God was thinking while He created each and every one of us, from what has been revealed to us by the beloved Son of God. We can say, God created each one of us so we can become His daughters and sons and enjoy eternity with Him in heaven. To do this, God gave us free will so we can chose which way we want to go. We could choose His way and be with Him forever, or we could choose the ways of the world and spend eternity in Hell with the devil and His angels.

God will not force us to choose Him or choose His ways. That is why He gave us our free will. However, with our free will, there is only one right choice for us to make if we want to go to heaven and that is God’s ways, which is God’s plan for us. When, we choose God’s ways, He will be our God and we will be His people. God sent His only begotten Son into the world so He can lead us to Him. He is our way, our truth and life. His light shines in us through the Holy Spirit so He can guide and shepherd us till the end of time. He came into our world as the light of the world so we might walk in His light and not in darkness that leads to eternal death. His word is our lantern night and day. As He said in the garden to His Father, not my will, but your will be done, so should we imitate Jesus by doing the will of God.

When we sin, God sees our action as turning our backs on Him, instead of turning our faces to Him. When we choose our own way or follow the ways of the world, we turn our backs on God who created us, and loves us, and has given us everything we have. One thing that keeps us from following God’s ways, is because it makes demands on us. However, if we obey God’s will even if it is demanding, we will find peace and joy. We are all guilty of turning our backs on God at one point or another in our lives by sinning. However, God calls us to obedience or to listen to Him and repent of our sins because His love for us should make us desire to turn to Him with love so, He can become our God and we can become His people.

In our first reading, from 1st Samuel, we have a beautiful story about God’s plan for the youngest son of the nine sons of Jesse, David, whom God chose to become the second king of Israel. To the human eye of Samuel, there were other brothers who were more qualified than David whom God anointed. When Samuel thought he was supposed to anoint the eldest brother Eliab, God told Samuel that he judged by human appearance and with human eyes and not by God’s ways. This was God’s plan for David. God looks into the soul of every one of us for our worthiness for His mission. He looks into our soul and not our outside appearance. He looks into the inside of the cup and not the outside. It is when we act according to God’s ways and not our ways that we will have peace and joy in our lives.

In our second reading from the letter of St. Paul to the Ephesians, St. Paul reminded them and us that before we started following God’s ways, we were in darkness, and ***(how dark was that darkness that leads to eternal damnation!)*** But now we are in the light of Christ which leads to goodness, righteousness, and truth and other virtues that are fruitful. Jesus has brought us from darkness into light; and by our acting as children of light, we will be pleasing to God. These are God’s plan for us. However, we must attribute the new knowledge that we have to the grace of God and the knowledge that what we are still lacking will not be ours until our darkness has completely become light. God by sending His Son, has rescued us from the power of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of His beloved Son.

In our Gospel reading, we have the story of the man born blind. Last week we reflected on the woman at the well. The woman, changed her life around to follow Jesus, and she did not keep her new found faith to herself. Instead, she made sure all her town people knew about it too. This is our second week of three scrutinies which are meant for those who are going through RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults). It is a time for them to reflect on their lives to find the obstacles that might keep them from fully following God’s ways (that leads to deeper faith) and see how Jesus overcomes them. And it is a time for those who are already in the Church to do the same. It is not Catholic to be a ***cafeteria*** catholic.

Our story today unfolds with Jesus and His disciples walking and Jesus saw the man born blind from birth. (In the way St. John the Apostle puts it, we might assume that Jesus was looking for this particular man). Then, His disciples wanting to know exactly who sinned for him to be born blind. So, they asked Jesus why? Jesus answered them that it was not the fault of anyone. And that God allowed the man to be born blind **“so that the works of God might be made visible through him.”** This is in God’s plan for the man. Jesus then told them about His crucifixion and Resurrection by saying **“night is coming when no one can work.”** Because, for three days in the tomb, there will be darkness in the world and no one will be able to do the works of His Father. His disciples would go into hiding.

Jesus then proceeded to use His spittle to make clay signifying, He was creating eye balls for the blind man; just as at creation, God created humanity from dust. He then told him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. The man did, and could see and came back. On lookers were incredulous when they saw he could see. They could not believe their eyes. It is as if they were now blind because they did not believe in the works of Jesus. They were spiritually blind.

The authorities who were in spiritual darkness too could not believe that the man was born blind and could now see. He was interrogated twice and his parents interrogated once. In the darkness of their hearts, they called Jesus a sinner. But as promised by Jesus to those who believe in Him, the Holy Spirit would give them the wisdom to answer any question posed during persecution. The blind man answered all their questions and then, they kicked him out of the synagogue. Jesus then found him again, and asked him if he believed in Him. The man said he did and worshipped Jesus as his God. Jesus then told the crowd that He came to give spiritual sight to the blind and reveal the blindness of those who have sight.

As you might be aware, the Archdiocese of Portland released a Catechesis and Pastoral Guidelines to Schools and churches a couple of weeks ago to address the controversy on ***‘Gender Identity Theory.’*** While I do not have adequate space to deal with the article in today’s homily, you will find it at the site below:

 [A Catholic Response to Gender Identity Theory addresses “tsunami” of gender ideology – Catholic World Report](https://www.catholicworldreport.com/2023/02/16/a-catholic-response-to-gender-identity-theory-addresses-tsunami-of-gender-ideology/)

In light of our Gospel reading today, I would like to address the controversy scripturally in a short form.

We heard Jesus’ respond to His disciples that the man was born blind **“So that the works of God might be made visible.”** In the same vein, we say, God permitted people who have dysphoria about their sexual identity so, God’s works might be made visible. While I empathize with those who might be experiencing this problem, when we look into Scripture. Jesus said **“If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one of your members than to have your whole body thrown into Gehenn.” (**Matt 5:29). That is how seriously Jesus in using hyperbole, wants us to see the effect of sin. He wants us to know that some suffering in this world is less painful than the pain anyone will experience in hell due to sin for eternity. He also said **in John’s Gospel,** to the effect that His followers are in the world but not of the world. This means that, as Catholics, His followers, we cannot adopt the ways of the world. We are supposed to change the world and not be changed by the world.

This is a**Quote,from question and answer *by Archbishop Sample* in the(The Catholic World Report).**

 ***“People who have gender dysphoria genuinely suffer and we must have great compassion for them. There is a disconnect from what their minds are telling them and what their bodies are telling them. It is a genuine psychological condition, and we need to love people in this situation. However, we cannot give in to gender identity ideology, which has taken over our culture. Pope Francis has referred to it as the ideological colonization of the culture and has stated that it must be resisted”***

As we come with utmost reverence to receive Jesus in the Eucharist, let us ask Him for more spiritual sight in our hearts.