

“Beyond the Surface of Things to Spiritual Reality”

1. **Humans see the appearance, but God sees the reality.** There is a tendency in us humans to only look at the surface: *if someone is good looking, or charming, or smart, or funny, we tend to overlook more serious defects of character.* This is pointed out in the first reading from Samuel: when God says to the prophet Samuel when choosing a King, ***God doesn’t look at the appearance, but looks into the heart.*** Ironically in a funny way, a paragraph later after God cautioned Samuel about this, the author of the book of Samuel points out that David whom God has chosen as King: *made a splendid appearance; He was ruddy, a youth handsome to behold.* Ha-ha – **who cares what he looks like?! We humans do** - in our limited perspective!☺ We have such a hard time getting beyond the surface of things; but we must - or we won’t make much progress in the spiritual life.
2. **St. Paul says something frightening, but then beautiful in the 2nd reading about us believers:** *You were once darkness (not in the darkness but darkness itself!), 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. Take no part in the fruitless works of darkness ... don’t even mention them.* This is again a battle for us humans: often we are attracted to, and even like the things of darkness rather than of the things of the light, of God. Just witness most of what is called entertainment on TV: *a bunch of violence, sexual innuendos and crude jokes, and the portrayal of lying, taking advantage of others and engaging in immoral sexual activity* – all portrayed as wonderful things - if only we could get away with all of it, without the consequences of law or other humans calling you to task - by being “judgmental.” **We who are followers of Christ are called to be different:** *to be in the world but not of the worldly mentality. To view people and things more and as God does, instead of how our fallen human nature does.*
3. **The Gospel today lays out this dynamic of light (faith) vs. darkness (unbelief) in great detail.** St. John the Evangelist tells this true story of the blind man cured by Jesus on a Sabbath, and all that flowed from that – good and bad; and how it affected everyone

in the episode. The first interesting bit of information is Jesus informing everyone that the man being born blind is a not a result of a sin of his or his parents. Some maladies are perplexing and just part of the fallen human condition, but Jesus says God's glory can be manifested through them – if the person turns to God in their malady. Sometimes even a miraculous cure follows. One of the great mysteries of the spiritual life is why some people are cured by God and others are not. It's all part of His wise Providential design. As St. Paul says in his letter to the Romans in chapter 8: *all things work for the good of those who believe in and love God.* Jesus in this case cures the blind man, and then chaos breaks loose: the Pharisees and Scribes are flipping out because He did it on the Sabbath; they are true **legalists** concerning the Sabbath to the point that works of charity were seen as a sin - what **silly nonsense** from people who should have known better! Then they attack the blind guy's parents who wisely say, *he is a grown man talk to him yourself.* This is so important in our life of faith. It is one of the great crosses of parents and grandparents to see their adult children and grandchildren drifting away or even rejecting the Catholic faith, and they don't know what to do. **Well, what to do is: pray and do penance for their souls.** And acknowledge like the parents of the blind man did, *that he is a grown man and needs to make his own decisions with the free will God gave him.* You can't live the Faith for other adults; you can only point them in the right direction. I see this as a priest, e.g., a real-life example: sometimes we will get a call from the father or mother of a bride or groom to be, to line up things for them to get married in the Catholic Church. That puts up a red flag right away for a veteran priest like me. For if someone is going to get married, they need to get in touch with the priest – if the parents or grandparents are calling, that usually means they are the ones interested in the Catholic wedding, and the actual people getting married are not that interested or very immature – which leads to big problems in the family and often a divorce down the line. In our Faith life we are called to point others to God, but in the end only they can live it out - if they want to! All of this is a good lesson to ponder: it's only with **the gift of Divine Faith** that we can view things from **God's perspective** as opposed to the fallen human perspective: *to get beyond appearances, beyond the glitz and glamour of the material world to the invisible but everlasting eternal realities.* Let's pray in this second half of Lent for the gift of **a deeper Faith life**, for ourselves and others, **to see as God does.** God bless you.