

Dear Padre,

I am left-handed. Why doesn't the church allow the sign of the cross to be made left-handed?

A Catholic who is unable to make the sign of the cross with the right hand is certainly permitted to do so with the left. There is no rule against it. When Pope Saint John Paul II injured his right arm, he used his left hand to impart his blessing.

The sign of the cross is a sacramental, one of the symbols that identifies you as a Roman Catholic. Just like all such symbolic gestures, there is an expected uniformity. To use a secular example, at a University of Texas football game, fans of the Longhorns give the "hook-'em horns" sign. You wouldn't give the "thumbs-up" sign instead. It would be confusing.

It's true that at one time, the left hand was associated with evil. Jesus sends the goats to sit at his left and the sheep to his right. (See Matthew 25:33.) And, throughout the Scriptures, we read that Jesus sits at the right hand of God. (See Mark 16:19) The word "sinister" is from the Latin *sinister*, meaning "left."

Left-handedness is no longer associated with evil. If you wish to make the sign of the cross with your left hand, you may. But do consider why you are doing it. Most left-handed people have no trouble using their right hand for many simple tasks. If your purpose is a bit rebellious, maybe realize that signifying unity with your brothers and sisters in Christ is more important. ●



ALFONSO / CATHOPIC

Fr. Thomas M. Santa, CSSR / DearPadre.org

Do you have a question for the Padre?

Go to DearPadre.org to send your question and to learn more about *Dear Padre*.

Monday
MARCH 16

Lenten Weekday
Is 65:17-21
Jn 4:43-54

Tuesday
MARCH 17

Lenten Weekday
Ez 47:1-9, 12
Jn 5:1-16

Wednesday
MARCH 18

Lenten Weekday
Is 49:8-15
Jn 5:17-30

Thursday
MARCH 19

St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary
2 Sm 7:4-5a,
12-14a, 16

Rom 4:13, 16-18,
22

Mt 1:16, 18-21,
24a or Lk 2:41-51a

Friday
MARCH 20

Lenten Weekday
Wis 2:1a, 12-22
Jn 7:1-2, 10,
25-30

Saturday
MARCH 21

Lenten Weekday
Jer 11:18-20
Jn 7:40-53

Sunday
MARCH 22

Fifth Sunday of Lent
Ez 37:12-14
Rom 8:8-11

Jn 11:1-45 or
11:3-7, 17, 20-27,
33b-45



MARCO JACOBILLO EPP / SHUTTERSTOCK

A WORD FROM POPE LEO XIV

Dear brothers and sisters, let us trustfully bring our ailments before Jesus, and also those of our loved ones; let us bring the pain of those who feel lost and without a way out. Let us cry out for them too, and we will be certain that the Lord will hear us.

GENERAL AUDIENCE, ROME, JUNE 11, 2025

Our Parish COMMUNITY

March 15, 2026

Fourth Sunday of Lent (A)

1 Samuel 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a / Ephesians 5:8-14 /

John 9:1-41 or 9:1, 6-9, 13-17, 34-38



Live as children of light, for light produces every kind of goodness and righteousness and truth.

EPHESIANS 5:8B-9

Born Free

MIGUEL DULICK

Today's gospel, the healing of the man born blind, is a terrific story that includes many details. Notice that Jesus, who has his own agenda, "so that the works of God might be made visible through him," does not even wait for the man to ask to be healed. But the man is a willing subject, allowing mud and saliva to be smeared on his eyes, agreeing to go to Siloam and wash. And, he's a quick learner. At first, all he knows is "the man called Jesus" healed him. Soon, however, he's calling Jesus "a prophet." Then, as a "division" ("schism" in the original) opens among the authorities and even in his own family, he defends Jesus' divine calling when the Pharisees mock Jesus as a "sinner." Finally, expelled from the synagogue, the man finds Jesus waiting for him with the ultimate revelation: he sees before him the Son of Man, "and he worshiped him."

Now, maybe we weren't born blind, but I venture to say a lot of us are short-sighted. Do I "see the works of God"? Starting from "the man called Jesus," do I keep going forward in faith, defending Jesus when he is mocked by people, to a deeper, fuller reality than even my own family may not understand? All the way to adoration, worship, a total handing over of my whole self to the Son of Man? Or, as Thomas would later say, when his own eyes were opened, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28). ●



LEARN ABOUT THE AUTHORS OF OUR PARISH COMMUNITY

Reflect

This week, I will pray for my eyes to be opened to something important for me to see.



The
Catholic Church
in Pocahontas County
West Virginia

OUR MISSION
Amen, I say to you,
whatever you did
for one of these
least brothers of mine,
you did for me.
(Matthew 25:40, NAB-RE)

ST. JOHN NEUMANN PARISH & CHURCH OFFICE, 714 Tenth Avenue, Marlinton WV 24954
ST. MARK THE EVANGELIST MISSION, 92 Catholic Church Road, Rts 250 & 92, Bartow WV 24920
ST. BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX CHAPEL, 6332 Snowshoe Drive, Snowshoe WV 26209
Telephone: St. John Neumann 304-799-6778, St. Bernard of Clairvaux 304-572-0847
Website: PocahontasCatholic.org
E-mail: Pastor@PocahontasCatholic.org



Patty Bryant
Margaret Bryant
Ann Burke
Danielle Cade
Dick Connor
Matt Madruga
Cynthia Olson
Quinn Riffle
Tristan Sizemore

EUCHARIST THIS WEEK

Friday	8:00 a.m.	St. John
Saturday	5:30 p.m.	St. Bernard
Sunday	9:00 a.m.	St. John
	11:30 a.m.	St. Mark



St. John Neumann Church is open for private prayer
every day during daylight.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is offered
before each Eucharist or by appointment,
and at St. Bernard on Saturdays 4:30-5:00 p.m.

The Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick
is available any time upon request.



Please call the Church office (304-799-6778) if you know of a parishioner who is sick, in the hospital or nursing home, homebound, deployed, or in prison.

To report an incidence of suspected child sexual abuse, please contact your local law enforcement agency, or you may confidentially contact WV Child Protective Services at 800-352-6513.
To report suspected cases of sexual abuse by personnel of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston to the Diocese, please contact the Diocese at 888-434-6237 or 304-233-0880.
To report suspected cases of sexual misconduct or sexual abuse by a bishop or eparch, please contact ReportBishopAbuse.org or call 800-276-1562.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

"It is so that the works of God might be made visible through him."
(John 9:3, NAB-RE)

ANNOUNCEMENTS & NOTES

- **Fund for the Poor collection** is this weekend at all our Churches. We use this fund to help the needy throughout Pocahontas County. Last year, we distributed \$13,868.31 in direct aid for various needs. Your contributions make this happen.
- **Vicariate meeting** is this Monday (March 16) at St. Francis de Sales Church in Beckley beginning at 11 a.m.
- **Family Resource Network drive-through food pantry** will be this Wednesday (March 18) at 503 Third Avenue in Marlinton. Food pantry is scheduled for 9 a.m. to noon, and 1-3 p.m., however, please check the FaceBook page for any change in time because of weather conditions. *Please remain in your vehicle and have your vehicle trunk or back empty and clean, to help us load quickly and safely.*
- **Community Lenten Prayer Service** is every Wednesday at noon at Marlinton United Methodist Church. The topic this week is "Reconciliation: Jesus Restores Your Relationship" (Acts 22:1-21 & Ephesians 3:13-14) presented by Carmen LaRue of the United Methodist Church.
- **Diocesan Lenten Service** at Mt. Olive Correctional Center is this Wednesday (March 18) at 1 p.m. This is a new effort of the diocese at many West Virginia prisons.
- **Stations of the Cross** is every Friday during Lent at 5 p.m. at St. John Neumann and St. Mark the Evangelist. Stations will include Exposition and Benediction at St. John Neumann this week.
- **Knights of Columbus Friday Fish Fry** in White Sulphur Springs is March 20 & 27.



	LAST WEEKEND	
	<u>attendance</u>	<u>collection</u>
St. John Neumann	40	\$1,160.00
votive candles		\$4.00
St. Mark the Evangelist	13	\$285.00
St. Bernard of Clairvaux	66	\$278.00
Fund for the Poor		\$193.00
total	119	\$1,920.00

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FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT - LAETARE SUNDAY - YEAR A

First Reading (1 Samuel 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a)

The LORD said to Samuel:
"Fill your horn with oil, and be on your way.
I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem,
for I have chosen my king from among his sons."

As Jesse and his sons came to the sacrifice,
Samuel looked at Eliab and thought,
"Surely the LORD's anointed is here before him."

But the LORD said to Samuel:
"Do not judge from his appearance
or from his lofty stature,
because I have rejected him.
Not as man sees does God see,
because man sees the appearance
but the LORD looks into the heart."

In the same way
Jesse presented seven sons before Samuel,
but Samuel said to Jesse,
"The LORD has not chosen any one of these."
Then Samuel asked Jesse,
"Are these all the sons you have?"
Jesse replied,
"There is still the youngest, who is tending the sheep."
Samuel said to Jesse, "Send for him;
we will not begin the sacrificial banquet
until he arrives here."
Jesse sent and had the young man brought to them.
He was ruddy, a youth handsome to behold
and making a splendid appearance.
The LORD said,
"There – anoint him, for this is the one!"
Then Samuel, with the horn of oil in hand,
anointed David in the presence of his brothers;
and from that day on,
the spirit of the LORD rushed upon David.

Responsorial Psalm (Psalm 23: 1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6,
Grail translation, 1963)

Response: The Lord is my shepherd;
there is nothing I shall want.

The Lord is my shepherd;
there is nothing I shall want.
Fresh and green are the pastures
where he gives me repose.
Near restful waters he leads me,
to revive my drooping spirit.

He guides me along the right path;
he is true to his name.
If I should walk in the valley of darkness
no evil would I fear.
You are there with your crook and your staff;
with these you give me comfort.

You have prepared a banquet for me
in the sight of my foes.
My head you have anointed with oil;
my cup is overflowing.

Surely goodness and kindness shall follow me
all the days of my life.
In the Lord's own house shall I dwell
for ever and ever.

Second Reading (Ephesians 5:8-14)

Brothers and sisters:
You were once darkness,
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;
rather expose them,
for it is shameful even to mention
the things done by them in secret;
but everything exposed by the light becomes visible,
for everything that becomes visible is light.
Therefore, it says:
"Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead,
and Christ will give you light."

Gospel Acclamation (John 8:12)

I am the light of the world, says the Lord;
whoever follows me will have the light of life.

Gospel (John 9:1-41)
(short form: John 9:1, [2-3], 6-9, 13-17, 34-38)

As Jesus passed by he saw a man blind from birth.
[His disciples asked him,
"Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents,
that he was born blind?"]
Jesus answered,
"Neither he nor his parents sinned;

it is so that the works of God
might be made visible through him.]

He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva,
and smeared the clay on his eyes, and said to him,
"Go wash in the Pool of Siloam" – which means Sent.
So he went and washed, and came back able to see.

His neighbors and those who had seen him earlier
as a beggar said,
"Isn't this the one who used to sit and beg?"
Some said, "It is, "
but others said, "No, he just looks like him."
He said, "I am."

They brought the one who was once blind to the
Pharisees.

Now Jesus had made clay
and opened his eyes on a sabbath.
So then the Pharisees also asked him
how he was able to see.
He said to them,
"He put clay on my eyes, and I washed,
and now I can see."

So some of the Pharisees said,
"This man is not from God,
because he does not keep the sabbath."
But others said,
"How can a sinful man do such signs?"
And there was a division among them.
So they said to the blind man again,
"What do you have to say about him,
since he opened your eyes?"
He said, "He is a prophet."

They answered and said to him,
"You were born totally in sin,
and are you trying to teach us?"
Then they threw him out.

When Jesus heard that they had thrown him out,
he found him and said,
"Do you believe in the Son of Man?"
He answered and said,
"Who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?"
Jesus said to him,
"You have seen him,
and the one speaking with you is he."
He said,
"I do believe, Lord," and he worshiped him.

Reflection (2023)

Imagine that you were blind, and then you regained
your sight. What a wonderful day that would be. If it
were a surgeon that got your sight back, you would
certainly be thankful – until you see the medical bills!
The story of the man born blind in the Gospel got his
sight back, and he was overjoyed and grateful, and
there was no price to pay.

But blindness in the story and also in the story in the
first reading is not just about visual sight, it is about
seeing God and seeing as God sees.

The Pharisees could not see God, in many ways they
were blind, while the man born blind could see who it
was that gave him his sight, he was not blind.

In the first reading, Samuel was looking for the king
chosen by God to lead the people. He was looking for
the one that "looked" to him to be the king. He wasn't
seeing as God sees. But God said to him "Do not
judge from his appearance or from his lofty stature,
because I have rejected him. Not as man sees does
God see, because man sees the appearance but the
LORD looks into the heart." David, the one chosen by
God wasn't even considered, except by God.

So, are we blind or do we see? Do we see God
acting in our world and in our lives? Do we see others
the way God sees others, not by their appearance but
into their heart? If so, we can see, and we can see as
God sees.

Reflection (2026)

"Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born
blind?" The thinking at the time was that if there was
any misfortune, it was punishment from God for
someone's sin. But Jesus makes it clear, that
misfortune is not God's punishment for sin. Rather,
Jesus turns the question into a discussion of miracles.
People often pray for miracles – sometimes the prayers
are answered with a "yes," but more often the answer
is a "no," although we interpret "no" as if our prayer
was not answered. So why are there miracles
sometimes and not other times? Jesus makes it clear
"it is so that the works of God might be made visible
through him." Miracles don't occur for the sake of the
miracle-receiver, they occur so that we might see God,
and that our faith will increase. The Pharisees had no
faith and could not see, but the blind man had faith and
so he could see. Are we like the Pharisees or are we
like the blind man?

15 March 2026
Fourth Sunday of Lent - Laetare Sunday - Year A

Penitential Rite

I confess to almighty God, and to you, my brothers and sisters,
that I have greatly sinned, in my thoughts and in my words,
in what I have done, and in what I have failed to do,
through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault;
therefore I ask blessed Mary ever-Virgin, all the Angels and Saints,
and you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God.
May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins,
and bring us to everlasting life.
Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

Prayer of the Faithful

Merciful Father, you lead us from darkness to light, and so we can lift up our needs to you in prayer:

- for Pope Leo, for strength as he promotes the values of the Gospel, we pray
- for politicians, that they will replace ambition with honesty, we pray
- for peace in the Middle East, we pray
- for the athletes competing in the winter Paralympics, that they will develop bonds with people of different nations and tongues and races, we pray
- for those who are blind, and those with other limitations, that they will flourish, we pray
- for all of us gathered for Eucharist, that our eyes of faith will grow, we pray
- for all those who have died, that they will be saved, we pray
- and for your other intentions
(pause)
for all our intentions spoken and unspoken, we pray

Almighty Father, you defend the poor and the weak, so we ask you to listen to our petitions and give us the sight of faith. We pray through Christ our Lord. Amen.