

How seriously do you take your spiritual life? Not just for your sake, but for others?

The Gospels place an emphasis on blindness as a metaphor -- it is a lack of seeing and understanding, like when we say, "Are you blind? Can't you see what's happening here? Don't you get it?" Jesus pointedly said to some of the Pharisees, "If you would just admit that you're blind, there'd be no problem; but you insist that you can see, and so your blindness persists -- you still don't understand." They weren't bad people; they just could not see who was right in front of them. They had their own assumptions, and couldn't see past them. This was very different than the experience of the man who had born blind. He not only gained the physical ability to see, but he gradually saw and understood who Jesus is -- which was the more important miracle.

This was the same way God worked with the prophet Samuel. God taught him to look beyond the appearance of Jacob's seven sons. Samuel is impressed with the first son who was tall and good looking, but God said no -- "God does not see like you see. You're looking at his appearance; but I, the Lord, look at his heart." God does not focus on our externals that we might use to make ourselves noticeable or memorable. God sees us much deeper than those things. God looks into our hearts -- the place where good and evil have their roots.

Which is why we humans often try to keep our privacy -- we have hidden lives, we keep things to ourselves, we keep secrets. Imagine if everything we thought was private was published on the front page of the paper! Instead we keep quiet; we deceive and mislead and lie so that things stay in the darkness.

Scrutinies is a sort of "publication" -- a public confession of the Elect's weakness and sin, their thoughts and deeds that belong to the darkness; and their cry for God's help. When God looks into your heart, what does God see there? [pause]

God already knows -- that's the good news! You may think it's hidden, a closely held secret, but God already knows what is hidden. God is trying to shine light in the places we try to keep dark; God is trying to bring healing to those tender places; those sore spots; those bleeding wounds; those gaping holes. God does not want to be kept out of those places, as if we are somehow protecting God. Those are precisely the places where God wants to be, bringing us comfort, and healing, and peace. [pause: Imagine that happening right now. Invite God to come into those dark places, and to bring you comfort, healing, and peace.]

Then, as Christ conquers the darkness in your own life, as that light of Christ overcomes the darkness, he wants you to be his light, to be light in the places where you study and work and play. [Again, imagine yourself ... as a body of light. No matter where you go, you are bringing that light. Every place you enter becomes filled with light because you are bringing the light of Christ there. Whoever you are talking with experiences a sense of healing and peace, not even knowing why, because your presence is bringing God's light to that conversation. Imagine every business meeting you are in has a quiet undercurrent, because the light of Christ, pouring out of you, is overcoming whatever darkness may be in that meeting.]

That why we have these Scrutinies throughout Lent, which don't only speak about the Elect's faults and weaknesses and sins, but ours too! They are brought out of hiding, out of the darkness and into God's most wonderful healing light. We invite God to clear out all the darkness in our lives, so that we're like beautiful chandeliers reflecting Jesus' light in all directions, a beautiful light bringing peace and healing; a powerful source of divine light that overcomes the darkness of the world. If you take this seriously, your spiritual life will become quiet and very powerful, for your sake and for others.