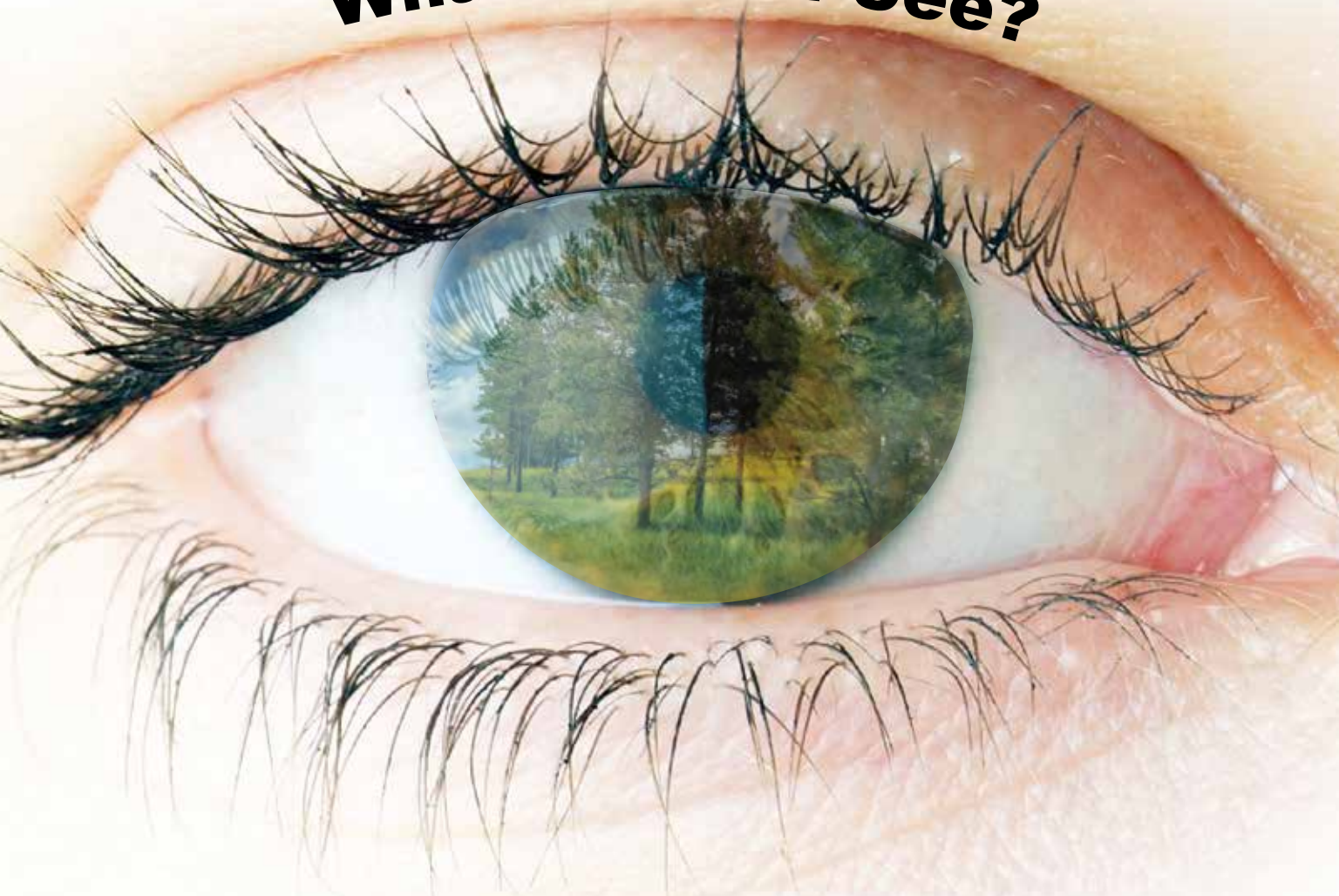




VISIONS

March 22, 2020
4th Sunday of Lent
Laetare Sunday

What Do You See?



Look at these definitions of the word **see**. Put a check next to the meanings that involve more than physical seeing.

- ☐ Perceive with the eyes
- ☐ Understand, catch on
- ☐ Find out
- ☐ Become aware of
- ☐ Date

- ☐ Have a mental image
- ☐ Imagine
- ☐ Have foresight
- ☐ Have insight
- ☐ Attend



The word Louie is the type size that Louie McGee needs to read clearly.

Louie McGee can't see friends or visitors reach out to shake his hand, so he quickly extends his own so the other person can shake it. He is legally blind and probably will never drive. However, he finds ways to live a fun and adventurous life.

Editor's Note: Louie first shared his story with Visions when he was thirteen. He is now nineteen.

Stargardt disease is a rare form of macular degeneration that is destroying Louie's central vision. He can't see straight ahead. The photoreceptors in his retinas don't work at the centers of his eyes, only at the corners. Doctors found the condition when Louie was five. It got worse in second grade.

"That is how it works," Louie explains. "It stays the same for a long time, then dips, and then plateaus again."

"Louie is a teenager now," says his mom, Annie McGee.



"That's when his eyes might get worse."

"My vision is normal for me. It's all I have ever known, and I know how to use it," explains Louie. Louie has peripheral vision. To see a classmate,

Louie has to turn his head and look at them out of the corner of his eye.

His younger sister, Carmella, never has trouble focusing on Louie's face even though he seems to be looking away over her shoulder.

"I'm used to it," she says. "Friends get used to it and think nothing of it."

"Louie is so accepting of his disability," says his mom. "He is a good influence in the school. He has helped other kids accept their disabilities as normal too. He's been a mentor to younger kids."

To study, Louie has his work and assignments on an iPad. "I can make type bigger. My vision

is 20/350. It's hard because I can only read two or three words at a time."

"His memory is phenomenal from listening to stories and assignments instead of reading," says Carmella. "We take a lot of road trips as a family. We listen to stories on our trips."

"We read word problems in math out loud," says his mom. "It takes a lot to get all the details of a problem with such limited reading. It's a strain on his eyes."

"The iPad also helps," says his mom, "because Louie can make the type white on a dark background. That's easier for him."

In 2013, Louie became one of ten young people who received a national award from Prudential Financial for volunteer service. The award included \$5,000 for the youth volunteer and \$5,000 for the Foundation Fighting Blindness, an organization that raises money to fund research to cure Stargardt and other diseases of the retina.

Over six years, Louie and his family raised \$50,000 through a 5K Vision Walk and a Dining in the Dark event they put on with friends. Team Louie is the biggest group at the walk each year.

"It's because our friends help, and so many kids turn out," says Carmella. "Usually we have about one hundred."

The Dining in the Dark event raised \$4,000 this year. "I took safety glasses and put opaque tape inside at the center. Everybody who put on the glasses saw the way I do," says Louie. The experience aims to



Dining in the Dark



help other young people know what the disease is like.

“He sets up Louie’s Café,” explains Carmella. “He writes out a menu. I put on the glasses, and I couldn’t read the menu.”

“We make an obstacle course that kids try to navigate blindfolded with a cane,” says his mom. “Everyone has fun watching.”

“We have a box with pairs of things in it,” says Carmella. “Kids put on the blindfolds and try to find the same shapes with their hands.”

“Everybody gets to eat with blindfolds on,” says Louie. “I like the food to be messy. One year it was jello and spaghetti. This year it was penne pasta.”

Louie’s parents, Annie and Greg, felt terrible when they first learned Louie would eventually go blind. They took trips as a family to see beautiful places while Louie could still see. “Now Louie amazes and surprises us with what he can do,” says his mom.

Like most seventh-graders, Louie loves sports. “I swim and run track because that doesn’t depend on eyes much,” explains Louie. “I can play soccer. I can see the ball to kick. I’ve learned to compensate.

I ski and want to learn to play golf.”

“My dad and I bought bright colored jackets for skiing,” says Carmella. “Louie can see us.”

“Usually I go with groups,” says Louie. “The other kids help me know where I am.”

Louie inspires his mom but worries her too. “I only do cross-country skiing,” she says. “When the family goes downhill, I stay inside and knit. I find myself all in a knot, imagining what is happening.”

The McGees had no hope that Louie might one day see when they first learned about his disease. But they found a doctor at the University of Iowa who is doing research on retina diseases.

“Dr. Stone did a biopsy of my skin,” Louie reports. “Eventually he might be able to regrow my photoreceptor cells and somehow replace the ones I have.”

“Louie might have a miracle in his lifetime,” says his mom.

Louie and family



Louie McGee is now nineteen years old. With his family, he runs a nonprofit, Louie’s Vision, that works to build awareness, confidence, and accessibility for kids with blindness. He still promotes events like Dining in the Dark.

Louie focuses on possibility, not disability. In 2018, Louie set an impressive goal for himself. He began to train to compete in an Ironman Triathlon. The race includes a 2.4-mile swim, a 112-mile bike ride, and a 26.2-mile run. This is a feat for anyone, but how does someone with only 10 percent of normal vision compete? Even more concerning was the fact that Louie had never competed in a half-triathlon or even a marathon. But he was determined.

Milan Tomaska, who lives near Louie and has competed in ten triathlons, agreed to become Louie’s training partner and to travel with him so that he could compete. After six months of running, swimming, and biking, the two traveled to Louisville, Kentucky, to compete in the Ironman. Despite the cold, wet weather that forced about a third of the participants to abandon the race, Louie and his two partners (Milan and Steve Roeske, who competed alongside the pair) finished in twelve hours and fifty-eight minutes.

“I want others to think about what they want to do first,” says Louie. “I don’t think about my vision first. I think about what’s possible, and then I can figure out the accommodation. If you do that, you’ll be able to reach farther.”

“TALK”

- 1 What can you learn about the word *normal* from Louie?
- 2 How was Louie a leader and mentor to other students when he was thirteen? And now?
- 3 What is fun about the Dining in the Dark event?
- 4 How do you treat people you meet who live with disabilities?



SUNDAY GOSPEL

4th Sunday of Lent

John 9:1-41

Jesus Heals a Man Born Blind

Have you ever wondered how one of Jesus' miracles affected the person he healed? The story of the man born blind dramatizes this question. The miracle that gives the man sight happens in a couple of verses near the beginning of John 9. Then Jesus disappears in this story, and the man born blind, who can now see, is on his own to explain his sight.

The man returns to his neighborhood. People start to talk and wonder whether he is the same man they once knew. The Pharisees, who are the teachers of the Law of Moses, doubt that Jesus can be from God because he broke the Sabbath to heal the man.

The man born blind has to speak for himself in the

drama. Pay attention to how his description of Jesus changes throughout the Gospel.

Work in small groups to analyze each scene on pages 4-7. Using the dialogue and pictures in each, give the scenes appropriate titles.



Scene 1

Jesus gives a blind man sight.



Scene 2

Neighbor 1: Isn't this the man who used to sit and beg?

Neighbor 2: He is the one.

Neighbor 3: No, he just looks like him.

Man Born Blind: I am the man.

Neighbor 4: How were your eyes opened?

Man: The man named Jesus made some mud, rubbed it on my eyes, and told me, "Go to Siloam and wash." So I went and, as soon as I washed, I could see.

Neighbor 5: Where is this man?

Man: I do not know.

Narrator 1: As Jesus walked along with his disciples, they saw a man who had been born blind.

Disciple 1: Teacher, whose sins caused him to be born blind? His own or his parents' sins?

Jesus: His blindness has nothing to do with his sins or his parents' sins. He is blind so that God's power might be seen at work in him. I must keep on doing the works of the One who sent me as long as it is day. The night is coming when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

Narrator 1: Jesus spat on the ground and made some mud. He rubbed the mud on the man's eyes.

Jesus: Go wash in the Pool of Siloam.

Narrator 2: *Siloam* means "sent." So the man went, washed, and came back able to see.

Catholic

FAITH WORD



SACRAMENTS OF HEALING These sacraments continue Jesus' work of healing and salvation through the power of the Holy Spirit. They include Penance and Reconciliation and the Anointing of the Sick.



Scene 3

Narrator 1: Then they took the man who had been blind to the Pharisees. The day that Jesus opened the man's eyes was the Sabbath.

Pharisee 1: How did you receive your sight?

Man: Jesus put some mud on my eyes, I washed, and now I can see.

Pharisee 2: The man who did this cannot be from God because he does not obey the Sabbath law.

Pharisee 3: But how could a man who is a sinner do such mighty works as these?

Pharisee 4: You say he opened your eyes. What do you say about him?

Man: He is a prophet.



Scene 4

Narrator 2: These teachers were not willing to believe that the man had been blind and could now see, so they called the man's parents.

Pharisee 5: Is this your son? If he was born blind, how is it that he can now see?

Father: We know that he is our son, and we know that he was born blind. But we do not know how he can see now, nor do we know who opened his eyes.

Mother: Ask him. He is old enough to speak for himself.

Narrator 1: His parents feared the Jewish authorities, who had already agreed that anyone who believed Jesus was the Messiah would be thrown out of the synagogue.

“TALK”

1 What unites or divides the people in this neighborhood?

Who thinks Jesus is from God? Why?	Who is not sure? Why?	Who thinks Jesus is not from God? Why?

2 How does the man born blind grow in faith?

Who does the man born blind say Jesus is in these scenes?

- Scene 2 _____
- Scene 3 _____
- Scene 5 _____
- Scene 6 _____



Scene 5

Narrator 2: The Pharisees again called in the man who had been born blind.

Pharisee 6: Give God the praise! We know that this man, Jesus, is a sinner.

Man: I do not know if he is a sinner or not. I do know one thing: I was blind, and now I can see.

Pharisee 7: What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?

Man: I already told you that, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples too?

Pharisee 8: You are his disciple. We are disciples of Moses! We know that God spoke to Moses. As for that fellow, we do not even know where he comes from!

Man: What a strange thing! You do not know where he comes from, but he opened my eyes! We know that God does not listen to sinners. God listens to those who respect him and do what he wants them to do. Since the beginning of the world, no one has heard of anyone opening the eyes of a man born blind. This man must be from God or he would not be able to do such a thing.

Pharisee 9: You were born in sin—and you are trying to teach us? Get out of the synagogue!



Scene 6

Narrator 1: Jesus heard that the teachers had thrown out the man born blind and went to talk to him.

Jesus: Do you believe in the Son of Man?

Man: Tell me who he is, sir, so I can believe in him.

Jesus: You have already seen him, and he is the one who is talking with you now.

Man: I believe, Lord.



Scene 7

Jesus: I came to this world to judge, so that the blind may see and those who see will become blind.

Pharisee 1: You don't mean that we are blind too?

Jesus: If you were blind, then you would not be guilty of sin; but since you say, "We can see," your sin remains.



and DOCTRINE

Connecting GOSPEL

Jesus Invites Us to See Who He Is

This Sunday's Gospel gives us a different idea of what it means to see. The man born blind receives his physical sight through Jesus' healing. As the story continues, the man appreciates more fully who Jesus is.

The man washes the mud from his eyes, and he can see the people and world around

him. When people question what happened, he begins to tell them things about Jesus that they can't see.

The man born blind knows that Jesus must be from God. If not, Jesus couldn't have healed his blindness. The man born blind stands up for Jesus; he first believes that Jesus is a prophet.

He then comes to believe that Jesus is God.

Our faith can grow like the faith of the man born blind. The more we hear about Jesus—through prayer, studying Scripture, and attending Mass—the more ways we will see, become like him, and grow in faith that he is God with us.

God Chooses a New King for Israel

Every four years, voters in the United States choose a president. Candidates make speeches and debate on television to tell us the kinds of leaders they will be. We make our choice by voting.

In about 1000 B.C., the tribes of Israel chose a leader to unite them into a kingdom. For the 200 years before, judges had led the tribes in times of trouble.

These judges did not preside over courtrooms; they were holy men and women with the courage to lead the People of Israel in a time of crisis and with the power to convince tribes to fight together.

As peoples around them formed kingdoms, the tribes of Israel wanted to become a kingdom with a king too. Samuel, the last of the judges, helped the tribes choose a king.

What qualities do you think this king needs?

The Bible describes two versions of how Israel chose its first kings. In one account, the people cast lots. In the second story, Sunday's First Reading, God

The man born blind doesn't receive his sight for any reason besides grace. His sight—both his physical vision and his spiritual understanding—is a gift. In the same way, we receive faith as a free gift from God. The Church teaches that we should share the gift of faith with others. Faith is a glimpse of the future that we will spend with God for all eternity in Heaven.



David wears a king's crown, which indicates his royal lineage. The Star of David behind his head is a modern addition. Jews did not use the Star of David as a symbol of their faith until the seventeenth century. Find the domes of the Temple in Jerusalem in the upper-left corner and the city's walls across the bottom. The field and trees in the upper-right corner indicate where David kept his flocks. However, it's his harp or lyre that people most closely associate with David. In 1 Samuel 16:23, we learn that when David played, Saul felt calmer.

directs Samuel to anoint one of the seven sons of a man named Jesse in the town of Bethlehem. Jesse calls his six older sons together. When Samuel sees them, he thinks surely the oldest boy, Eliab, who is handsome and tall, is the one God has chosen to rule Israel. Not so.

Find in 1 Samuel 16:7 God's standard for choosing a leader.

None of Jesse's six older sons is the one God wants to be the king of Israel. God chooses the youngest, a boy who is out herding sheep. No one had even bothered to call this boy to meet Samuel because he was so young.

Read 1 Samuel 16:10–13 to find out whom Samuel anoints as Israel's king. What is special about the leader that Samuel chooses?

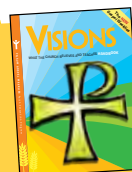
What gift does God give David?

What leadership qualities do you have?

How do you use these qualities?

1 What things have you learned this year about your faith that you did not know last year? In what ways do you most enjoy learning about God and his Church?

2 How can you share the light of faith with someone you know?



In this Sunday's Gospel, Jesus gives sight to the man born blind. He cures his blindness. The **Sacrament of the Anointing of the**

Sick is one of the Sacraments of Healing (see *Catholic Faith Word*, page 4). This sacrament is not meant to cure people's illness or fix their injuries. Turn to pages 24–25 in *What the Church Believes and Teaches* and identify the many important effects of this sacrament.

Sure, what your Church, school, and parents have to say about Jesus is important, but what do *you* have to say about him?

SPEAK UP!

If you had to say who Jesus is in your own way, what would you say?

What does the Church say about Jesus?

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ,
his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again
from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand
of God the Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge
the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting.
Amen.



With My Family and Friends

Scan here
for parent
resources. ➔



Pray

God, open my eyes so that I will see you in all of Creation. Amen.



Think

If you were blind and could suddenly see, who or what would you be most excited to see?



Act

Instruct the members of your family to close their eyes for part of the Mass. Encourage them to pay attention to things they can smell, taste, hear, and feel. After Mass, discuss what you observed when you couldn't see.

➔ For **free** at-home activities, visit  gospelweeklies.com/seasonal