

Homily for the 4th Sunday of Lent

September 11, 2001 was one of the darkest days in modern American history. But the hospitality and generosity of 12,000 people became a **light** in that darkness. When the rest of the world was in despair, when hate and violence seemed to win, the people in Gander, Newfoundland told another story. You see, on that day — September 11, 2001 — 38 planes were commanded to land suddenly in Newfoundland.

The Broadway musical, *Come From Away*, tells the story of how the 12,000 citizens of this tiny place took care of over 7000 passengers who were stranded — some who had lost relatives in the attacks, and some who weren't sure if the relatives were alive.

They cooked and they baked and they gave them clothing and they told stories to make people laugh. They were truly the light in the darkness.

And so we don't have to be a David, anointed by Samuel as the new king, or even the man born blind who is healed by Jesus, to bring light to our world.

In fact, if you think about it, we never know the **name** of the man born blind.

And it never switches to "the man who can now see." He is still always known by his disability.

And yet, as we are reminded by Jesus, he is the only one in the story who can really see.

It's not the Pharisees... it's not the scribes... it's not even his parents or the disciples.

Only the man born blind, who is healed, truly sees Jesus for who he is and what he does.

What does Jesus do?

- He acts.
- He sees a need, and He takes care of the need.

The others have seen the need —

the parents who probably didn't know what to do and couldn't perform a miracle,

the Pharisees and scribes were too caught up in themselves and being righteous, and the disciples, even though they are with Jesus for so long, still are blind.



Actions.

Anointing,

David is changed by the anointing of Samuel.

It reminds me of the story of Isaac and his two sons, Jacob and Esau.

Jacob tricks his elderly father, Isaac, to obtain the blessing.

Isaac blesses the wrong son.

As Americans we say, well, he was *tricked*. *Just bless Esau*.

But the Jewish people believe that when you said the words of blessing it had a power;
it accomplished what it said.

Once the words were out, they've done it, they accomplished it.

We believe this!

Baptism — Once the water is poured and the words

"I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" are spoken,
you are *always* baptized.

The Eucharist — Once those words are said, the words of consecration,
it is the Body of Christ! There is no going back.

But we see it in the secular world as well.

The series, *The Crown*, is a tremendous feature about the life of Queen Elizabeth.

In one of the scenes she is crowned in a formal ceremony.

Once the crown is placed on the person, she is Queen.

Once the president takes the oath of office, he is president.

So today, we have action and words.

David, the most unlikely, is brought in and chosen as the new king.

He is anointed.

And Jesus, in the gospel, smears clay on the blind man's eyes and says,

"Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means *"sent"*),
and the man is cured. He can **see**.

The Man Born Blind.

We don't even know his name

He is **defined** by his disability.

Yet he, by the words and actions of Jesus, has his eyes opened

and is the *only one* to recognize Jesus as the Son of Man, ***the Christ***.

He, like David, is the chosen and the light for us.

And what about **Light** for us these days?

I know, after a while, I simply turn the news off because it seems to be all darkness.

It bombards us with anxious thoughts.

We get tired of hearing from the experts.

In the midst of this there are people who are determined to bring light.

People in Spain put a cake outside of the door of an 80-year-old woman

who was celebrating her birthday and then sang to her from their balconies.

A fitness expert in Italy got on the rooftop and led everyone in an exercise class.

One of our parishioners down at Saint Charles is driving food deliveries as a volunteer every morning.

One of the commentators on Scriptures said, in the light of the man born blind,

we need to cultivate a beginner's mind. He didn't know everything or think he did.

It was all about **Attitude**. And it still is.

We have to be aware of our limitations

and open to the truth and surprises.

Lent is a good time to cultivate beginner's mind.

It's a time to see ourselves and the world, not with our prejudices, but as **God** sees.

We have to pretend that we don't know things and be open to people, ideas, and, yes — even God.

In the Gospel story, everyone seems to be in the dark about who Jesus is.

Most feel threatened and confused by Jesus, even by his good works.

But if we let Him in, He is the transformation that takes us from darkness to light.

Soren Kierkegaard said, *"There are two ways to be fooled. One is to believe what isn't true; the other is to refuse to believe what is true."*

Jesus is the Truth that leads us to all truth even in these times of uncertainty and darkness and opens our eyes.

– **Fr. Jerry Francik**

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"The eye through which I see God is the same eye through which God sees me;
my eye and God's eye are one eye, one seeing, one knowing, one love."

—*Meister Eckhart*