

THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT, Year A
1 Sm 16:1,6-7,10-13; Ps 23:1-3,3-4,5,6; Eph 5:8-14;
Jn 9:1,6-9,13-17,34-38 (Short Form) or Jn 9:1-41 (Long Form)

TIME TO BE BOLD

Homily by Fr. Michael A. Van Sloun
Saturday, March 25, 2017, 5:00 p.m. Mass
Sunday March 26, 2017, 8:30 and 10:30 a.m. Masses

There is a **fascinating subplot** in the account of the cure of this blind man.
It is a **comparison** of the **blind man** and his **parents**.

John, the author of the gospel, likes to do comparisons and offer choices.
So let us **compare** the **blind man** and his **parents**.
They reveal two very **different ways** to **respond to Jesus**.

At first, the **blind man** had **no faith** at all,
but an **amazing transformation** took place in him.

After the blind man was cured, his **neighbors** (see v. 8) asked him what happened,
and this is what he said:

“**The man** called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes” (Jn 9:11).
All he could say about Jesus was “**the man**.”
The blind man regarded Jesus as **a mere human being**,
a remarkable person, to be sure, but **just a human being**.

The blind man then reflected more about the miraculous thing that had happened to him.
So along came a second group of people, the **Pharisees** (Jn 9:13),
and they asked him, “What do you have to say about him,
since he opened your eyes?” (Jn 9:17a).
The blind man replied, “He is **a prophet!**” (Jn 9:17b).

Please notice how the blind man **changed his position** on Jesus.
First he said Jesus was a **man**, just a human being.
The second time he said that Jesus was a **prophet** (“from God,” “of God”).
This is a gigantic **leap of faith!**

The **more the blind man thought** about the tremendous thing that Jesus had done for him,
the **more convinced he was** that Jesus was **more** than a mere **human being**.
He shifted his position: “**Jesus is a prophet, an agent of God.**”

The blind man spoke to his **neighbors** first,
the **Pharisees** second,
but the **last episode** is the **most important**,
his **face-to-face** encounter **with Jesus** himself.

So along came **Jesus**, and he asked the man,

“Do you believe in the Son of Man?” (Jn 9:35).

The man answered back, *“Who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?”* (Jn 9:36).

Jesus went on to explain, *“You have seen him and the one speaking with you is he”* (Jn 9:37).

The man replied, *“I do believe, Lord”* (Jn 9:38), and he worshipped him.

What did the blind man believe?

He believed that **Jesus** is the **Son of Man**;

that Jesus is the **Lord**;

and because he **worshipped Jesus**, and because **worship** is **reserved to God alone**,
he came to believe that **Jesus is God**.

This is a huge **leap of faith**.

The blind man’s faith went up **three big steps**:

“**the man**,” Jesus is just a **human being** (Jn 9:11);

to “**prophet**,” Jesus is “from God,” “of God” (Jn 9:17);

to “**Son of Man**” and “**Lord**” (and worship), Jesus is **God** (Jn 9:38).

Meanwhile, we have his **parents**.

Remember, there is a **subplot** here.

The **parents** were really **strange**, bordering on **bizarre**.

If you are a parent, and if your child is troubled,
and something miraculous happens to resolve the trouble,
you would be super happy, overjoyed!

These parents should have been **wild with happiness** over their son’s cure,
but they were **ridiculously subdued**.

The **Pharisees** asked the parents, *“Is this your son?”* (Jn 9:19).

Mom and dad meekly said, “Sure, he is our boy” (paraphrase, Jn 9:19).

The Pharisees continued, *“Was he born blind?”*

Mom and dad flatly replied, “Yes, he was born blind” (paraphrase, Jn 9:19).

The probe continued, *“How does he now see?”*

Mom and **dad** had **witnessed** his miraculous recovery (see Jn 9:21a).

They should have been **wild with excitement, dancing around,**
yelling at the top of their voices, “Our son can see!”

And if they knew that their son had been cured (Jn 9:21a)

they surely would have **asked** him **how** it happened or **who** did it.

It is quite a **stretch to believe** their comment,

“We do not know who opened his eyes” (Jn 9:21b).

They “**didn’t want to know**,”

because they were well aware they would get in **big trouble** if they said it was Jesus (Jn 9:22).

So, to get off the hook, the parents said,

“O, you’ll have to ask him. He’s old enough to speak for himself” (Jn 9:19-21).

Mom and dad were **afraid** to speak openly in front of the **Pharisees**.

They were **afraid** that they would be **expelled** from the **synagogue** (Jn 9:22b).

They were **afraid** to speak openly in front their **neighbors**.

They were **afraid that** their neighbors would **make fun of them**.

Mom and dad **didn't want to offend** anyone.

They **didn't want** to be part of any **controversy**.

They **hated conflict** and wanted to **keep the peace**.

The **subplot** is a **comparison** between the **blind man** and his **parents**.

The blind man **grew tremendously** in his **faith**.

He went from "**the man**" (Jn 9:11),

to "he is a **prophet**" (Jn 9:17),

to "I do believe, **Lord**," and he revered him as **God** (Jn 9:38).

Meanwhile **mom** and **dad** out of fear **said nothing** and **did not want to offend** anyone.

John wrote his gospel roughly sixty-five to seventy years after Jesus had died (c. 95-100 AD), and he had **two basic types of people** in his church community:

people who were **willing to speak** out **boldly** about Jesus, like the blind man, which sometimes got them in trouble;

and **people** who were **afraid** to say much of anything, like the parents,

who **played it safe**, never stuck their neck out, were terrified to witness to their faith.

And **so often**, my friends, **we are like the mom and dad**.

When it comes to **witnessing our faith**, when it comes to saying things like:

"I believe in Jesus," "Jesus has worked great wonders in my life,"

"I'm a Catholic," "I love the Church," "I believe in the Gospel of Life,"

when we're at **work**, or we're at **school**, or we're with the **relatives**,

instead of being courageous, like the blind man,

we are reserved, sheepish, afraid of conflict, and we **don't say much**.

We **do not want conflict** and we play it **safe**.

Today Jesus is asking you and me

the exact same question that he asked the blind man:

"Do you believe in the Son of Man?" (Jn 9:35).

My friends, it is **time** for us to **be bold**.

Jesus is **more** than a mere **human being** (Jn 9:11).

Jesus is **more** than a **prophet** (Jn 9:17).

Let us, like the blind man, proclaim with our lives, both in word and in deed,

whether politically correct or not,

that **Jesus** is the **Lord** (Jn 9:38),

the **Messiah**, the **Son of God** (Jn 11:27),

and the **Savior of the World** (Jn 4:42).