

4 Lent A

March 26, 2017

Cathedral

5:00 and 10:00

Listen again to this gem in today's Gospel, **“When Jesus heard that they had thrown out (the man born blind), Jesus found him...”**

“Jesus found him...”—so the Gospel puts it. Jesus took the initiative to find the one thrown out! Friends: In life, have you ever not made the cut in something, and felt discouraged, if not defeated? Have you ever been made to feel like you were an outsider? Last night Coach Calipari of Kentucky was here for Mass. From my casual observation he seemed to have been praying fervently. He's going to have a tough time against the Tarheels to get to the Final Four. But what about those in life who feel they've lost in the first round of the tournament?

In this Lenten Gospel, right before Jesus started to find the man born blind, it said that the religious leaders hurled this insult to that man, now with sight: **“You were born totally in sin, and you are trying to teach us? Then they threw him out.”**

“...born totally in sin.” Have you ever felt being labeled like that—**“in sin”**—by others, or perhaps, by yourself?

Jesus took the initiative to find the one thrown out. Jesus took the initiative to find that one labeled **“totally in sin.”** Ours is a Savior who goes on a search mission to find those who know what it's like not to make the cut...those who know what it's like to feel less than.

Indeed, the man born blind didn't find Jesus. It's the other way around: Jesus found him. At the Gospel's start, it was Jesus who took the initiative to heal that man born blind. It was only then—*after* the miracle—that the man born blind began his journey to faith in Jesus. At first in the story he simply calls his benefactor the **“man they call Jesus”** (John 9:11). Then he grows in faith and calls him **“a prophet”** (verse 17). Then he takes a further step and says that Jesus is **“from God”** (verse 33). Each step of the way, Jesus was patient with him. Jesus didn't pressure him. But then, after he was thrown out, Jesus found him and

led him to full faith: **“Do you believe in the Son of Man?”** At the very end, that man born blind—who now could see fully with faith—answered Jesus, **“I do believe, Lord,” and he worshipped him.”**

Poor guy, up until he had met Jesus, he never had even a “first chance.” But, it’s our Lenten song, and we give thanks to the “God of Second Chances.” Several years ago, a parishioner asked me to meet someone who had been estranged from the church for many years, and she had recently been diagnosed with a grave illness. That parishioner set up a meeting, and so this very ill person and I talked and celebrated God’s mercy. When her illness allowed, she faithfully came to Mass on Sunday. A good while later, in one of our conversations, she told me she wanted to plan her funeral Mass. The first thing she asked, “Father Val, I want that song ‘God of Second Chances’ sung during my funeral Mass. It’s my story.” And we did sing that song at her funeral Mass.

“God of second chances, open our lives to heal.” It’s our Lenten song. As St. Paul quoted in his passage from a baptismal song in those first decades of the church, **“Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.”**

Christ found that man born blind, and gave him light—in his eyes, and in his faith. *This* Lent, let’s allow Jesus to find us...and give his light.