

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius  
A sermon preached by Father Bradford on The Fourth Sunday of Lent  
March 22, 2020

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The cure of the man born blind spread like wildfire in Jerusalem. His blindness wasn't like COVID-19! The blindness was congenital. None of the great Old Testament saints ever restored sight to the blind. This beggar was well known in the city. When Christ performed the miracle cure, the news got around Jerusalem in a hurry. Crowds began to gather.

But you and I are not concerned with 1<sup>st</sup> Century Jerusalem scuttlebutt! Nor do we need to be convinced Jesus is Lord. The good news is the declaration by Jesus that His disciples are about to see something important. The restoration of sight to the man born blind would be a manifestation of the works of God (*John 9:3*) The disciples were put on notice they were about to see the tip of the iceberg, a peek inside from under the corner of the tent. Along with the event of the Transfiguration, this cure is like the trailers shown as previews of coming films in movie theatres. The cure of the man born blind is a momentary glimpse of the vast machine of Divine Love Who is always working blessings and grace for us behind the appearance of things.

The whole apparatus of the Heavenly realm offers worship to Almighty God. Through that worship, providing access to God, the whole reason for the Church on earth is to support each soul in the pursuit of holiness. The works of God are *there*. They are happening when we are aware of them and when we are not. Today's gospel gives us one of those moments. As Jesus passed from the Temple, He cured the man born blind. It was a momentary sighting of the works of God, and it happened in a time and place we call "recorded history."

In St John's gospel there is internal evidence to support the view the short little episode of Jesus with the woman taken in adultery is not an *original* part of the written account. If that is so, then this encounter with the man born blind followed immediately the attempt of the Jews in the Temple precincts to crush the Lord Jesus with stones! That would make what happened quite remarkable. At such a time when virtually anybody else would have been concerned for his own safety, Our Blessed Lord proceeded to a work of love. In this incident we see Jesus doing two things. He showed compassion for an unfortunate soul and determined to cure

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him. And at the same time the Lord was seeking again to convert people who, a few minutes earlier, had been trying to murder Him!

Ponder also the *method* Christ used in the cure. A mere word from the Lord could have accomplished the miracle. That happened in other healings. Not here! Jesus made some clay and with it covered the eyes of the blind man. If there had been any residual glimmer of light in those eyes, it was now sealed out! Was Jesus destroying the man's vision before restoring it? How often that is our own experience! We feel perplexity and darkness and very much alone just before we are granted a vision greater than any we have had up to that point. We have a saying: "The night is darkest just before dawn." Is that observable phenomenon a reflection of how the Creator works in souls?

Notice also the blind man was required to go in *faith*. How do we know that? He was *still blind* when Jesus sent him to the pool. He still had clay sealing his eyes. Think of what an absolute fool he must have looked to the gathering crowd! But the only one who counts is the Lord! Here then is a fool for Christ's sake. The man was sent, and not just to *any* pool of water, but to a pool named *Siloam*. *Siloam* means **sent**.

Saint John has no interest in providing us with an ancient and entertaining story with a happy ending! An evangelist gives us the Gospel Good News *for right now, today*. So when he parenthetically reminds his readers *Siloam* means sent, St John is jumping up and down and waving a red flag! John wants us to know *Jesus Christ is the One sent from Heaven*. The remedy for our blinded souls is to bathe in the Precious Blood of the Redeemer. Then we too shall be like the man born blind. We too shall see Jesus with such a clearness of vision that all else before in our lives seems by comparison as nothing but darkness and shadows and the cause of our stumbling.