

Fr. John Sassani
Homily Given March 30, 2014
Fourth Sunday of Lent - Liturgical Year A

My oldest nephew Matthew is a fireman in the city of Boston. When the news reports began to circulate about the horrible fire in the Back Bay, Matt began to receive texts from his family and friends to see if he was safe. He was annoyed because, while he wasn't involved in the devastating fire, he *was* on duty, covering at one of the stations whose firefighters were in the thick of things at the fire. All of us were hoping that Matthew wasn't involved.

Worry and fear are part and parcel of the Gospel this morning. For years, the blind man and his family had been suffering from the man's disability and from hopelessness. There was no cure; there was no hope. He supported himself by begging for donations from pilgrims coming to Jerusalem. This particular day, Jesus comes along. He smears the man's eyes with mud and sends him to wash it off. And as the water ran off his face, he has a sensation totally unknown to him – he can see!

For years, this man and his family suffered from hopelessness – no cure, no hope.

St. Paul in his letter to the Thessalonians writes: We are not like those who have no hope. This line is always very comforting to me and is one of the Sacred Scripture texts for funerals. We not only grieve like those who have hope; our lives are immersed in the hope that comes from Christ and his Resurrection, which has changed everything.

The Church is coming closer to the days of Christ's death and Resurrection, the origin of our hope. These days are not just for Christ, but for us. They are not just about death, but about the whole course of our Christian lives: the day-to-day fears and worries – the destiny all of us are called to – the assistance that hope offers us day to day – the companionship we have with Christ – and the hope he offers us day to day because of his nature and by his resurrection.

We are called to be people of hope, real and tangible hope. I often think about a young woman I met through the RCIA journey. When I asked her why she wanted to become a Catholic, she told the story of someone anonymously and regularly leaving boxes of food at her family's back door when she was a child. Her family struggled, and the food was a blessing. One day, they saw it was their next-door neighbor and asked her what caused her to do this for them. She answered that it was her Catholic faith that taught her that this was what Christ would have her do – to feed the hungry. This neighbor's actions gave this young woman and her family real and tangible hope – and also led the young woman to join the Catholic Church.

These Lenten days prepare us for the renewal of our hope – today, at Easter, and always. As we come to the altar today, let's give thanks and refresh the gifts we receive here – faith, love, and hope – that transform us into Christ's disciples.