

On New Year's day in 1906
Alfred Fuller made his first brush.

That year he would sell his brushes door to door.

In his first year
Fuller sold the equivalent of \$250,000 in brushes.

Today is the Fourth Sunday of Advent.
It is also Laetare Sunday.
It is a time of rejoicing
because the light is approaching
and our salvation is at hand.

The readings today lead us to a meditation
on the coming of light into our darkness.

The first reading speaks
to the imperfection of our sight
that keeps us
from being able
to see as God sees.

Saul has sinned against God
and God has rejected him as king.

God sends Samuel
to Jesse of Bethlehem
to seek Saul's replacement.

God rejects the first seven sons,
finally picking the least likely, David.

God's comment is a meditation in itself:

Earthly appearance can be deceiving,
for God does not see as man sees.

By 1915 The Fuller brush company had 2000 salesmen.

By 1923
the company had the largest operating factory
in the world.

That factory is still producing the Fuller brush line today.

The Fuller brush man became iconic,
appearing in magazines,
comic strips and even movies.

He was a familiar, welcomed, and trusted sight
at the front door of American homes.

The Fuller Brush man was a success for simple reasons.
He listened to what the customer wanted.
He was courteous.
He was kind.
He was helpful.
He sold products that lasted.

The Psalm today reminds us that Jesus, the good shepherd,
accompanies us through the difficulties we face in this life.

No matter how tough it gets,
no matter who turns away from us,
no matter who rejects us in this world,

Jesus is always there.

He grants us true sight in this life
Sight that lets us see the real and the unreal,
the good and the bad.

St. Paul reminds the Church at Ephesus
That in opening the door to Jesus
the people have let light into the darkness of their world.

He writes that when light enters a space,
everything in that space is exposed.

He tells the people that in awakening to the light,
they see the world they live in
as well as the light that Christ provides,

true light by which all may see.

In a similar way
the Fuller brush Man brought a consciousness
to the housewives
who answered his knock at the door.

His presentation
and the offer of his products
made them aware
of the challenges in their houses.

In the Gospel today
we hear of the man born blind.

We celebrate the miracle
and the demonstration of the power of God
by Jesus,

but if we reflect
on what happens
after the miracle,

we can be forgiven for asking if
Jesus really did the man born blind
a favor.

Once the man can see,
what does he witness?

His neighbors question
whether he is the blind man they know.

The authorities claim
that his sight was restored by some act of evil.

His parents fail to support him.

He is repeatedly asked to tell his story,
by people who refuse to believe what he says.

He finds, very quickly
that it is not easy to rejoice
in the gift he has received.

In receiving his sight,
the man born blind sees
a world he had not seen before.

In his blindness
there was a security and assurance.

His neighbors knew him.
He begged at the same place each day.
He apparently lived with his parents.
The authorities took no notice of him.

At the end of today's Gospel
The man born blind is rejected by his community.
Jesus finds him and asks a question.

Do you believe in the Son of Man?
The man born blind responds that he
doesn't know this "Son of Man".

Jesus makes a simple statement.
You have seen him,
he is the one you are speaking to.

Jesus reminds the man born blind
that his gift of sight
is not just physical,
but is also spiritual.

Just as the Fuller Brush man
brought awareness and the means
to clean a dirty house to housewives

Jesus brings sight to the Man born blind,
sight which allowed him
to see the weakness and failures of the world,

and to see the goodness and permanence
of the God who touched him.

The Fuller Brush Man
didn't come empty handed.
He had a sample case
full of tools to address these challenges,
and to make the housewife's life easier.

Jesus' conversation with the man born blind
shows us that Jesus does not come empty handed,

knocking at our door
to show us the dark things
in our lives and our world.

Rather, Jesus comes
prepared to accompany us
on our journey,

offering a life of light,
and the sight to find it.