

When the Cameron Football Dragons accomplished their slow march toward the state playoffs last fall, I was sure we would win that final game because the opposing team came from a high school named Blair Oaks. Blair Oaks sounded like the name of a canceled television soap opera, not a football team. And what can you expect from a place of education that abbreviates its name B. O. High School? But that Jefferson City team matched us and took the championship by the slimmest of margins, one single point. You cannot judge by appearances. You have to look for more.

In today's first reading, God teaches Samuel the same lesson: You cannot judge by appearances. God and the prophet Samuel have not especially been getting along, but God thinks even less of King Saul. So God asks Samuel to anoint a new king. Samuel seems reluctant. So God tells him rather abruptly at the beginning of the reading, "Fill your horn with oil, and be on your way." Samuel goes to Jesse's house in Bethlehem, where he is to pick out the new king from among Jesse's sons. What follows is an early reality show, where Samuel looks over the sons of Jesse and has to guess which contestant God has chosen to become king. Samuel picks the oldest, tallest and most handsome son. God says, "Wrong guess. You can't judge by appearances." Samuel guesses again and again, and then finds out God tricked him. The person God wanted wasn't even there. He was out tending sheep. When he appears, we are told he was "ruddy, a youth handsome to behold and making a splendid appearance." So after telling Samuel not to judge by appearances, God chooses as king one who has a pleasing appearance after all - but God saw something more in him. Samuel anoints him, and only then, at the very end of this passage do we learn the name of this son of Jesse. He is David, and the spirit of the Lord rushed upon him.

Our scriptures today warn us about blindness. We look and look, but never really see. Once we see with God's eyes, possibilities open up. We look on some people with scorn, but through God's eyes, they become lovely. We may look upon ourselves as unlovable - or too lovable, but when we look through God's eyes, we know the truth about who we are, how we have let God down, and how we have pleased God.

Today we are receiving four people into the full communion of the Catholic Church. Minnie Bray, Kevin Barnes, Jeff Blackburn and Eric Thomas have all been baptized in other Christian Churches, have all reflected on how God sees them, and have all asked for communion with us. Soon they will make a profession of faith and be confirmed before receiving communion with us for the first time. In their confirmation, they will receive an anointing, and the spirit of the Lord will rush upon them as it did upon David. We have not relied on appearances. We have looked for something more. We have relied upon the spirit of God and the strength of their faith.

As Easter draws near, let us be attentive to God's spirit in our midst, who rushes upon each of us and upon all of us, summoning us to new lengths of charity and service, beyond what our eyes alone could see.