

Homily of 30th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B (10-28-18)

The first reading has two interpretations. The first interpretation is that the reading is an excerpt of Prophet Jeremiah's prophecy of consolation to the exiled people of Israel. Jeremiah consoled them to be hopeful and look forward to their redemption from their Babylonian captors and oppressors: "Behold, I will bring back from the land of the north; I will gather them from the ends of the world, with the blind and the lame in their midst, the mothers and those with child; they shall return as an immense throng. They departed in tears, but I will console them and guide them; ... on a level road, so that none shall stumble." The second interpretation is that this passage is a prophecy about Jesus, the redeemer, who was to come to liberate the world from sin, affliction and sorrow, as exemplified in today's Gospel.

The story of Bartimaeus in the Gospel is very encouraging and at the same time challenging. It is encouraging because in the end Bartimaeus received his sight. It is challenging because it shows us how Bartimaeus persevered until connected with Jesus.

On hearing that Jesus was passing, he began to cry out to him. To draw Jesus' attention, Bartimaeus called him by his ancestral name, "Son of David." The Gospel made it clear that "many people rebuked him, telling him to be silent." He refused to be silenced. He refused to be discouraged. The reading says, "He kept calling out the more." He caught Jesus' attention who stopped and said, "Call him." That the blind man had cloak on him means that the weather was, probably, cold. But when Jesus sent for him, he suddenly, became warm. There was immediate interior and exterior transformation. "He threw aside his cloak, sprang up and came to Jesus." His request, "Master, I want to see." Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has saved you." When he received his sight, instead of returning to his begging spot to pick up his mat and his cloak and go home, immediately he followed Jesus on the way. From then on, it was no longer his way but the way of Jesus. Bartimaeus teaches us to persevere in prayer and in seeking the face of God. Let nothing discourage us. Like Bartimaeus, let us throw aside the cloak weighing us down and go to Jesus. Bartimaeus' cloak is whatever that is weighing on us, weakening or paralyzing our spiritual energy in such a way that we no longer have faith.

Bartimaeus' story is not about physical blindness. It is about spiritual blindness of all kinds:
We are spiritually blind when we have no hope that God makes a way even where there is no way.
We are spiritually blind when we refuse to accept the truth.
We are spiritually blind when we lose sight of the bigger picture.
We are spiritually blind when we are jaundiced eye in our consideration.
We are spiritually blind when we are unable to discern God's signs.
We are spiritually blind when we are unable to see God's hand and his blessings.
Therefore, each of us is spiritually blind in one way or another. Let us pray and be open to healing.

Bartimaeus' experience reminds us of God's invitation to us in Psalm 50:15, "Call on me in time of distress, I will rescue you, and you will glorify me." Bartimaeus' experience reminds us of the words of Jesus in Luke 11:9-10, "Ask and you will be given; seek and you will find; knock and it will be opened to you. For the one who asks receives, and the one who searches finds, and him who knocks it will be opened." Keep asking, keep seeking, keep knocking until something happens. Let us be like Bartimaeus who refused to be discouraged or silenced until Jesus answered him and healed him.

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