

## Homily of Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B, 2024

**Jeremiah 31:7-9; Psalm 126:1-6; Hebrews 5:1-6; Mark 10:46-52**

The first reading is a part 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 them back from the land of the north; I will gather them from the ends of the world, the blind and the lame in their midst, ..." (Jeremiah 31:8).

The first reading is also Jeremiah's prophecy about Jesus, the redeemer, who was to come to liberate the world from sin, affliction, and sorrow, as exemplified in the healing of the blind Bartimaeus in today's gospel. Bartimaeus' story is symbolic. Bartimaeus represents all of us.

Homeless Bartimaeus was sitting by the roadside and begging for alms. He must have heard about the great things Jesus was doing in various towns. On hearing that Jesus was passing, the name and the man he had heard about, he didn't want to miss the single moment opportunity. Bartimaeus did not even know, as Scripture scholars tell us that, that was to be Jesus' last journey through Jericho. Bartimaeus began to cry out to him. To draw Jesus' attention, he called him by his ancestral name, "Son of David." The gospel makes 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." Jesus stopped. I imagine that Jesus stopped to know who kept shouting his name and his ancestral name. Jesus said, "Call him." The cloak the blind man was wearing shows that the weather was cold. But when Jesus sent for him, there was an immediate interior and exterior transformation. He suddenly became warm. "He threw aside his cloak, sprang up, and came to Jesus." Jesus asked him what he wanted. Bartimaeus replied, "Master, I want to see." (Another translation says, "Lord, let me recover my sight," which suggests that Bartimaeus was not born blind.) He did not ask for money or food or accommodation or any material thing. Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has saved you." When he recovered his sight, immediately he followed Jesus on the way. Bartimaeus was no longer going to follow his own way, which might have made him lose his sight.

Is Bartimaeus' faith not challenging to us? He teaches us how to call on the Lord in our helplessness. Like Bartimaeus, let us refuse to be discouraged. Let us refuse to be silenced. Let us not give up, and withdraw into self-pity, and blame others for being the reason we gave up. Bartimaeus teaches us persistency and perseverance. He teaches us that if we follow the way of Jesus, we will not lose our sight. Jesus promises us, "Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8:12). Bartimaeus grabbed the last miracle Jesus did in Jericho. Do not allow Jesus to pass you by. Stop him and grab your own miracle!

Like Bartimaeus, what we need, more than anything else, is the restoration of our inner eyes. Although we are not physically blind, we are suffering from blindness of the spirit, blindness of the heart, and blindness of the mind.

We are blind when sin obstructs our relationship with God.

We are blind when we do not see God's signs, and when we do not see what God wants us to see.

We are blind when we do not see those around us who need our help.

We are blind when we do not see God's hand in our lives.

We are blind when we do not accept the truth.

We are blind when we are unable to see the big picture.

We are blind when we are unable to see reality.

We are blind when we are opinionated and narrow-minded.

We are blind when we lack perception and discernment.

We are blind when we lack insights and initiatives.

We are blind when we are gullible (easily deceived).

We are blind when we lack self-control and are overtaken by fear or sentiment or ego or power or such vices as anger, greed, lust, jealousy, envy, selfishness and so on.

We are blind when we live in denial of our blindness.

The irony is that we do not acknowledge our blindness. When Jesus confronted the Pharisees for their blindness, they denied it and said to Jesus, "Surely, we are not blind, are we? (John 9:40). We are like the Pharisees. We deny our blindness. Healing and deliverance cannot take place when we live in denial.

Let us pray:

O Lord, open the eyes of our spirits, hearts, and minds to realize our various blindness so that we can be healed as Bartimaeus was healed. As scales fell off from Saul's eyes and his sight was restored, may scales fall off from the eyes of our spirits, our hearts, and our minds that we may see again. Direct our inner eyes to find our desires, which you have approved. May we not seek blindly or seek in vain. O Lord, deliver us from every danger and from our afflictions as you delivered the Israelites from their Babylonian captors and oppressors. Amen.

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