

30th Sunday in Ordinary Time – 2024 B

Over the years, I have come to like Bartimaeus a lot, revealing so much about the infinite love of God we are called to reflect as disciples of Jesus. Other gospels related this miracle, but Mark alone gives us the **name** of this blind man whom Jesus befriends and heals. In Greek, “Timaeus” means “honored or valued one,” while the prefix “Bar” is Hebrew, meaning “the son of.” So “Bar-Timaeus” literally means “the child of honor,” that is, a person with value. But that’s not how the crowds saw this Bartimaeus – just another blind beggar, one of many of life’s unfortunates, and a noisy nuisance at that. We can almost hear the voices trying to silence him: “Don’t bother the Master – He has more important things to do.” ***But the Master does not have more important things to do, for this is what Christ had come to do – to reclaim the value of every child of His Father.*** Jesus sees the worth of Bartimaeus: one in need of healing, compassion, and care. He stops His journey, calls for him, and gives Bartimaeus his sight. He honors the value of this child of God whom the crowds were ready to pass by.

Some 600 years before, Jeremiah’s vision for the redemption of God’s people had included gathering ALL of them together, with the blind and the lame in their midst. When the Kingdom of Christ is fully perfected in heaven, there will be no more hunger or thirst, weakness or disability, sickness or death. But we are not there yet. And so, while we are on the way to that promised life of heaven, the blind and the lame are to be in our midst – valued, protected, loved. For Jeremiah, the community caring for its members who are dependent on those around them is a sign that they are indeed God’s chosen ones. It was a challenge then; it is a challenge now – but a challenge that calls out from us the best that we can be.

In our day, the figure of Bartimaeus might take the form of the unborn, who have no voice of their own; the mentally and physically disabled, who struggle to keep up with the world’s expectations; those who are troubled, or addicted, or poor; the immigrants and refugees who flee persecution and violence; those who suffer from the diminishments of age and who again at the end of their lives become dependent on

the understanding and patience of others. *As we enter the voting booth, these beloved of God are the real question before us. Guided by Catholic faith and listening beyond the clamor and rhetoric for the voice of the Holy Spirit, who do I trust to best respond to this comprehensive view of God's will for us, for ALL of us?* Jesus sees our worth – each child of God, regardless of our status in worldly eyes – persons of infinite value and inviolable dignity. Those concepts seem abstract, so He gives us two simple tests: “Do to others as you would have them do to you;” and “Whatever you do for the least, you do for Me.”

We are not alone in this task; we hear the words of the Gospel today, as real and fresh now as then: “Take courage; get up; Jesus is calling you.” As we face the challenge of care for those who need us, even with our votes, these Scriptures remind us that when we stand before Jesus at the end, it will be the blind and the lame, still in our midst, that will testify that we have truly understood the words of Jesus. *The Gospel comes alive for us when each of us considers: Who is the Bartimaeus, the child of value, that God will place in my path this week?*