

## HOMILY 30<sup>TH</sup> SUN OT YRB 2018

I was talking to someone recently who is blind. He told me that he has been able to develop other senses to compensate for his vision loss. He said that he can frequently identify people that he knows by their smell. Sometimes it is obvious, like if someone wears the same cologne all of the time, you can tell. But he said people use a whole range of different scented products such as lotions, laundry detergent, shampoo, and the whole combination of scents can be identified with certain people. He also said that he can identify people by sound. The sound of someone's voice is obvious but sometimes he can tell who they are by how they walk, the shoes they wear, their clothing that makes a sound. He also told me that he can sense when he is approaching a solid object before he runs into it. This is called shadow vision. He has developed all kinds of abilities that I do not have to compensate for his lack of physical vision.

In the Gospel reading today we encounter Bartimaeus who is blind. He has figured out that Jesus is approaching and he calls out to him: "Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me." Calling Jesus the Son of David was the same as calling him the Messiah. How did Bartimaeus have the spiritual vision to know that Jesus was the Messiah? This was the last miracle that appears in the Gospel of Mark. All kinds of people saw miracles that Jesus performed. Remember there were 5,000 at the multiplication of the loaves and fishes alone. Many people saw Jesus' miracles but very few figured out that Jesus was the Messiah. However Bartimaeus, who had never seen the miracles, figured it out. Jesus healed Bartimaeus and he followed Jesus from that day forward. Bartimaeus did not have physical sight, but he had great spiritual sight.

I think there are three types of vision that are important to us. The first is physical vision. This is important so that we can see dangers that are approaching, so that we can do certain tasks, so we can see the expressions on someone's face when we look at them. The other two types of vision are very important to our spiritual lives. The second is moral vision. The third is spiritual vision, and the last two I want to discuss today.

The way we develop moral vision is through the formation of our individual conscience. We need to consider Sacred Scripture, particularly from the Gospels, the model that Jesus gives us, the tradition of the Church and Church teaching. This provides the basis for our individual conscience formation. I think in the past our culture generally supported Christian values, but no more. For example, it is pretty much acceptable in

our culture for couples to live together before marriage. This is a big shift in our cultural norms. People kind of see it as a stepping stone to marriage, but what do studies show? Studies show that only 35% of couple who live together get married and of those who do marry, the divorce rate is 63% compared with 33% among those who do not live together. Well, maybe you think you will be part of the 35% that get married and then part of the 37% that stay married. Or maybe you would have a better chance for things would turn out well for you is you did not live together before marriage. There is wisdom in the teachings of the Church. We need to continue to form our individual conscience throughout our lives. We are going to have elections next month. I encourage all of you to vote. There are many issues. Vote for the candidates and proposals that uphold our Catholic values. Vote your conscience. More and more people are thinking what is moral is what I think is moral at the time, and as long as I do not force my opinion on others it is ok. I think we get ourselves in trouble by doing that. We can rationalize just about anything to ourselves. We need an external frame of reference. Our culture no longer provides that, but our Church does. John Paul II said that conscience is for us to have a conversation with ourselves. Bring our intellect into play, and then we need to have a conversation with God. We know we cannot fool God, he sees our heart.

The third type of vision is spiritual vision. Spiritual vision is informed by faith. Helen Keller once said: “The most beautiful things in the world can’t be seen or even touched. They must be felt with the heart.” In the Gospel reading, the disciples saw the miracles with their eyes, but this did not lead to spiritual vision. Maybe their physical vision got in the way. Bartimaeus saw that Jesus was the Messiah without seeing the miracles or even seeing Jesus. We need to see how Jesus is working in the world. I hear people say: “Isn’t funny how things just seem to work out on their own or wasn’t it a coincidence that the person that I needed just happened to come along at the right time? This is God working in the world. The more we see God working in the world the more our faith is strengthened. We can gain spiritual vision if we have faith the Jesus is God, that he loves us unconditionally all of the time, that he is always with us, that he is always caring for us and will never let us go.