

HOMILY ~ 30th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME OCTOBER 23/24, 2021

The story this morning of the healing of blind Bartimaeus suggests to us that there are three kinds of blindness. The first kind of blindness is the **physical blindness** of Bartimaeus. The second kind of blindness is **the blindness of the disciples**; they cannot yet see what they must do. The third kind of blindness is the **spiritual blindness** of you and me; we, too, miss the obvious sometimes.

Batman, the great crime fighter and protector of Gotham City, and Alfred, his trusted butler, went on a camping trip. After a good meal and a bottle of wine, they lay down for the night and went to sleep. Some hours later, Batman awoke and nudged his faithful friend. "Alfred, look up and tell me what you see." Alfred replied, "I see millions and millions of stars." Batman then said, "Well Alfred, what does that tell you?" Alfred pondered for a minute and then replied, "**Astronomically**, it tells me that there are millions of galaxies and potentially billions of planets. **Astrologically**, I observe that Saturn is in Leo. **Horologically**, I deduce that the time is approximately a quarter past three. **Theologically**, I can see that God is all-powerful and that we are small and insignificant. **Meteorologically**, I suspect that we will have a beautiful day tomorrow. Why, what does it tell you?" Batman responded, "Alfred, someone has stolen our tent." **Alfred missed what was right in front of his nose.**

Here we are told, "**Jesus was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a sizable crowd. Bartimaeus, a blind man, sat by the roadside begging.**" There was no other way to survive. There are no universal health plans - no safety nets. He is on his own. He had to beg to live. He is on the road day after day and, at some point, he hears about the healer – named Jesus of Nazareth. He probably heard of the miracles from people passing by. He hears that Jesus is coming by and as he draws close, he takes his shot. He cries out: "**Jesus, son of David, have pity on me.**" Here again the lack of Christian charity from the disciples and others following Jesus is on full display. It is all about them. We must overcome the discouraging voices that pull us down in faith. They rebuked Bartimaeus to be silent, but he shouted all the more. There are discouraging voices who tell you it is not possible or why waste your time waiting and hoping on God - "putting all your eggs in one basket." I am here to say, nothing is impossible with God and nothing is impossible for a determined soul! There are many forces of discouragement in our world today, like the voice of the crowd rebuking Bartimaeus to silence. It only takes a determined will and resolute faith to achieve our goals in life or obtain favors from God.

They all knew that people with disabilities had to beg, yet they quickly dismiss him – no compassion. He kept calling out all the more, (he has nothing to lose) "**Son of David, have pity on me.**" Jesus stops and says, "**Call him.**" Jesus says, "**What do you want me to do for you?**" The blind man replies: "**Master, I want to see.**" Jesus tells him, "**Go your way; your faith has saved you.**"

We are told - immediately he received his sight; he became a follower in that moment. He left following the crowd and Jesus. He is

given physical eyesight but also new, spiritual eyes. We all have heard parts of this story because Bartimaeus and those present told everyone they could about what Jesus had done.

When we lose faith, we are spiritually blind. Sin could also lead us to spiritual blindness. When we fail to see the good in others, we are blind. When we glory in vanity, we are blind. When we judge others and are greedy, we are blind. When we habitually engage in an immoral lifestyle, we are blind. When we think we cannot succeed without doing evil, we are blind. *We have to pray to have a clear vision of Christian values and priorities in our lives and to acknowledge the presence of God dwelling in ourselves and in our neighbors.* A clear spiritual vision enables us to see the goodness in others, to express our appreciation for all that they have been doing for us and to refrain from criticizing their performance.

This Gospel account is also about the will to persevere against all odds – pushing aside those who would stop you. And that will you have seen in yourself or in others – it is all around us. A friend of mine, Mike, teaches college English. His students come from all walks of life, and they are diverse in background, academic ability and age. Some come directly from high school. Others come back to college, after decades - sometimes, to change and reinvent their lives – to reboot so to speak: to get that degree they always wanted. To finally live for themselves. Mike has a blind student who is in her forties. She is pursuing a degree in social work as she wants to help those like her before it is too late; you see, she was not always blind. It came from a medical history that she caused in, as she says, a reckless youth. She has written a memoir describing her journey – so far. Mike has come to know her well as she is taking his class for the **3rd time**; she needs it to graduate and she keeps taking him. She reminds me of Bartimaeus; she has tenacity and a drive that is helping her through this second stage of life despite obstacles that meet her every day.

She will likely succeed this time because of her persistence, and because she finally wants to. My friend, Mike, thinks she will make a wonderful, effective counselor so needed these days, but it will not come easy. Her story will help others who are also struggling; she will help others in various stages of blindness to see. Many are still blind to risks they take. We know all too well about the consequences. The two stories meet in several places: grit, bravery, stamina, backbone, fortitude are some of the synonyms. It is the courage to sense and seize the moment, and that is exactly what Bartimaeus did and Mike's student is doing. That courage can be life changing.

If Bartimaeus did not call out to Jesus – he would have passed him by. It is the same with us. This is a lesson of grace: grace is that place that God meets us halfway if we reach out to Him and ask. Too many times – we too are blind – and go it alone because we already know it all; see how that's worked out. Would not we all long to hear:

“What do you want me to do for you?” “Go your way – your faith has saved you.”

In Christ, *Deacon Don*