

HOMILY for 30th SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME – Year B

This Sunday's Gospel tells us about an amazing healing miracle that Jesus did. Reflecting on that, I'm reminded of this cute story that I'd like to share with you.

Little Billy was in the pediatrician's waiting room when he saw another boy his age crying. "What's the matter?" Billy asked him.

"I'm here for a blood test, and they're going to cut my finger!"

At this, Billy burst into tears. "Why are you crying?" the other boy asked.

"I'm here for a urine test!"

Believe it or not, Jesus knows our pains & would be ready to heal us regardless of our problems. For He wants to ease our pains & restore us to a new life & a good relationship with God. That is why He entered our world to share in our suffering on the Cross & bring us salvation & the promise of the eternal life. That is such a blessing about our God & religion. This Sunday's Gospel shares with us an example of a blind beggar named Bartimaeus who evidently had endured his blindness for years & wanted to be healed. To help us relate to this poor man's suffering & appreciate his healing miracle a little better, I'd like you to put yourself in his shoes & sit by the roadside begging for your daily necessities. We do not know if Bartimaeus was born blind or had suffered that condition due to an accident or his age. His blindness made him not able to work & have to resort to begging to get his daily provision. On a good day, he might get enough food to feed himself. On a bad day, he might go to bed hungry. We do not know if he had any family member or pet for him to look after or not. But, he basically depended on the compassion & generosity of strangers to help him make it through a day. Without their compassionate & caring heart, he would go to bed with an empty stomach. He went day by day not knowing how his future or his life would be like. Worst yet, he had to live a lonely life because his blindness kept him away from interacting normally with the rest of the world. However, he heard a lot about the wonderful miracles that Jesus did for the people of God, especially His compassionate & caring heart. That's why this Sunday's Gospel reports the following, "...On hearing that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he [Bartimaeus] began to cry out & say, 'Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me'" My friends, have you ever felt so desperate & lonesome like Bartimaeus did? Have you heard wonderful things about Jesus like Bartimaeus did? And would you dare to call out to Jesus for help like Bartimaeus did?

The reason I ask those questions & invite you to walk in Bartimaeus' shoes is to help us feel what he had been through & appreciate the healing miracle in this Sunday's Gospel a little better. When we are down in the dump like Bartimaeus was, the only one who would be able to lift us up & help us find a new life would be Jesus. For Jesus knows what we have been through & what we need the most at that moment. Besides, unlike other religious leaders, Jesus has a compassionate & caring heart. Every miracle that He did for the people of God was because He pitied their suffering condition. He fed a hungry crowd because He could not send them away to search for food themselves. Likewise, He healed suffering people with all sorts of problems even on a Sabbath day because he could not make them suffer one day longer. In fact, I believe that we would have a totally different world if everyone, especially our political & Church leaders, would have a compassionate & caring heart. Everyone would not say & do mean things to one another as we currently hear on the news every day. Instead, everyone would say to suffering people around them like Jesus did to the blind beggar in today's Gospel,

namely, "Call them over to me... And what do you want me to do for you?" My friends, can you picture any political & Church leaders of ours would speak that language of Jesus? Sadly, most of them don't! That is why I blame our current mean & violent world on our bad leadership. So, the first spiritual lesson that this Sunday's Gospel would teach us is to imitate Jesus & have a compassionate & caring heart. That is how we would be able to invite a blind beggar to come near us & find Jesus in us & try to build a more loving & peaceful world.

As Bartimaeus called out to Jesus for help, the crowd told him to be quiet. If he let the crowd dissuade & tell him what to do, he would never come near Jesus & find healing & a new life for himself. Or, if he quickly gave up on Jesus after hearing nothing back from Him, he would never meet Jesus & experience that healing miracle. When we feel desperate & alone in this world like the blind beggar Bartimaeus did by the side of the road, we got to search for Jesus & call out to him louder for assistance. That is the second spiritual lesson that this Sunday's Gospel wants to advise us. We should not look for help in booze, drugs, or worldly pleasures as the world might suggest to us. Or, if Jesus did not hear us cry for help the first time, we should not give up on calling out to Him in prayer or stop practicing our Christian faith altogether. That is why some Christians sadly have stopped going to Church or keeping up their good prayer life after facing a tragedy or a mishaps in their lives. They should look up to Bartimaeus & keep shouting louder, "Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me!"

After meeting Jesus face to face, Bartimaeus was allowed to ask for anything he wanted. He could ask for wealth, power, & fame. But, he did not want anything like that. Here's what he said, "Rabboni, I want to see!" Was Bartimaeus a fool? Or, did he want to teach us a great spiritual lesson by asking Jesus to restore his sight? And why was a good vision mean more to Bartimaeus than anything else on earth? No, Bartimaeus was not a fool. Rather, he was wise & able to teach us a third spiritual lesson when asking Jesus to heal his sight & let him see. He helped us realize that a good vision, especially a spiritual one, is worth more than anything else on earth. In fact, a good spiritual vision helps us make right choices on earth & eventually leads us to eternal happiness. That is why King Solomon picked wisdom over everything else such as battle victories or a wealthy & powerful kingdom when the Lord allowed him to ask for anything. That is why I chose the Title for two of my Daily Prayer Books, "Lord Jesus, I Want to See..." For I believe that if we can see everything clearly, we would make the right decisions & do the right things every day. That is why we should ask for a clear vision when we pray.

My dear brothers & sisters, one of the important missions that Jesus wanted to do for the people of God upon entering our world was to heal & restore us to a new life. For He knew that we all have suffered physically, mentally, & spiritually in this world. In fact, today's First Reading has prophesized about that vital mission of the Lord long before it happened because He has a compassionate & caring heart for us. We should have the same heart & continue His mission by committing ourselves to bring healing & a new life to the world around us. We do it by lifting up people instead of condemning them, by learning to forgive others instead of talking about retribution to people we do not like, & by bringing hope & real solutions to our troubled world instead of playing politics with the current problems for personal gain.