

October 24, 2021 Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Bishop Bradley's Reflections on the Sunday Readings

Earlier this week, I, along with all my siblings and their spouses, had the wonderful opportunity to explore the northern part of Michigan's Lower Peninsula. We got to enjoy the beauty of most of the Lake Michigan coastline including the awesome Sleeping Bear Dunes State Park, and all the way up to and including Mackinac Island, all the while enjoying the Fall leaves in the various stages of their gorgeous colors. Our week ended with all of us filled with amazement and wonder in the beauty of God's creation that is ours to enjoy here in Michigan, and with the hope that we can continue being amazed wherever we go.

Today's Readings from God's holy Word remind us how amazing our God is because the God of all Creation loves each of us as unworthy as we are; He constantly offers us His mercy and forgiveness, and will always reach out to us in any and every way to urge us to live in unity with Him and one another.

In our First Reading, Jeremiah, speaking on behalf of the Lord God, kept telling the People to "*shout with joy...exult...proclaim your praise*". Because the whole "*remnant of Israel*" had been captured and taken into captivity into a foreign land; but now, thanks to God's intervention, they were freed, and coming back home "*from the ends of the world, with the blind and the lame, mothers with their children...and other immense throngs*" thanks to God Who identified Himself as "*a Father to Israel...My first-born*"! And that's why today's Psalm Response reminds us: "*The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with Joy!*"

In today's Gospel story, we heard about an amazing personal encounter between Jesus and a blind beggar named Bartimaeus. Because of his disability of being blind, his days must have seemed endless, with one day was the same as the next. He was literally forced to sit on the "sidelines" of life while everybody else's life passed by in front of him. He was "marginalized"; a victim, who had to beg for alms just to survive each day. For him who was unable to see, and whom society chose not to see, his days were painfully slow.

Even though Bartimaeus was denied the gift of human sight, he clearly was a man who had another kind of sight---what we call "insight"---the ability to intuit what was taking place around him. He had heard of Jesus of Nazareth, and he obviously had heard all the crowds talking about Jesus as they walked past him

every day. And so on that particular day, as the crowds were pressing all around and the noise of excitement was getting louder because Jesus was passing right in front of him, Bartimaeus started shouting with all his might: *“Jesus, son of David, have pity on me.”* He cried out so much that the people standing around were rebuking him and trying to force him to be quiet. But he just kept yelling all the louder. Finally, Jesus heard him, stopped and said: *“Call him here.”*

When Bartimaeus heard that invitation, he threw off his cloak, sprang up, and came to Jesus Who looked at him and said: *“What do you want Me to do for you?”* Bartimaeus didn’t even hesitate; he said right away *“Master, I want to see!”* Jesus’ response was just as immediate as He cured the young man with these words: *“Your faith has saved you, go your way!”* But St. Mark tells us that Bartimaeus did not go his own way; he immediately began following Jesus *“on the way.”*

There are four wonderful virtues that Bartimaeus demonstrated in this beautiful personal encounter with Jesus that we would be wise to consider emulating. The first virtue is humility. Bartimaeus knew his limitations; he was blind and he knew he needed help, and furthermore, he knew that Jesus could be his greatest source of help. And so he kept saying: *“Jesus, son of David, have pity on me.”* We ask for that same gift at the beginning of every Mass as we call to mind our sins and ask God’s mercy---His pity. Our human tendency is to fill us with a false pride that makes us think that we don’t need anything from anyone, sometimes including God. But true humility allows us to admit our weaknesses, even as we are in touch with our strengths. But in our weaknesses---our temptations---our needs----certainly in our sins, we should have that same humility to ask Jesus: *“Son of God and Son of Mary, have pity on me!”*

The second virtue Bartimaeus demonstrated was perseverance. It didn’t matter how many people were telling him to be quiet, or to shut up, or to stop making so much noise. He just kept crying out for Jesus. He persevered; he never gave up. That is a powerful example for all of us. We should be just as persevering in calling out to God for His help, mercy, assistance no matter what other voices might try to convince us to give up. God will always hear our prayers, and as long as we don’t give up on God, God will never give up on us.

Bartimaeus also practiced the virtue of courage and decisiveness. As soon as Jesus heard his voice, and asked that Bartimaeus be brought to him, the apostles came and said: *“Have courage; Jesus is calling for you.”* Bartimaeus

didn't hesitate; he didn't let his fears get in the way; he didn't stop to wonder. He acted immediately, decisively, and courageously to immediately respond to Jesus' invitation to come to Him. Jesus extends that invitation to all of us at all times: "*Come to Me!*" It takes courage for us to respond to that invitation, but when we do so, we will find the answers to all our needs.

Finally, Bartimaeus demonstrated the virtue of **Discipleship**. Jesus cured him of his blindness and said: "*Your faith has saved you; go your way.*" But rather than running to his home, or finding his family, or thinking about what great options or choices lay open to him now that he could see, Bartimaeus chose to become a Disciple, and began following Jesus "*on the way*", a "way" that very soon would lead them to Jerusalem where Jesus would suffer, die and rise from the dead in Glory.

Being a Disciple is what we are called to be as well. Each of us is on a "journey of faith". Some of us may get distracted, or detoured, along the way at times; some of us may get lost along the way; some of us may be so busy admiring the beauty of God's world that we might ignore our responsibilities to God and neighbor along the way. But all along the way, as long as we're trying to "follow" Jesus, He will be staying close to us, and He will keep asking us: "What do you want Me to do for you?" When we are able to answer with the deep, insight-ful answer of Bartimaeus, "Master, I want to see"---only then will we get the answer correct. And that is when Jesus will be able to give us the spiritual ability to truly "see" the wonder of God all around us, and in every person we encounter along the Way.

God bless you, now and always!

Faithfully yours in Christ,

+ Bishop Paul J. Bradley