

Bishop Bradley's Reflections on the Sunday Readings

October 25, 2015 Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Earlier this week, most of our priests traveled to Cadillac, Mich., to join together with Bishop Raica and the priests of the Diocese of Gaylord for our annual Priests' Convocation. Archbishop Bernard Hebda, the Coadjutor Archbishop of Newark and the Apostolic Administrator of the Archdiocese of Minneapolis and St. Paul was the presenter, leading us in reflections on "The Priest: An Instrument of God's Mercy" in preparation for the Jubilee Year of Mercy Pope Francis is calling the entire Church to observe beginning on December 8th, just six weeks or so from now. Those four days of Convocation were a wonderful time of reflection, ongoing formation, fraternal support and renewal for our entire Presbyterate. Now that we have returned, it's hard to believe that this is the last Sunday in October, the end of Daylight Savings Time comes next Sunday, and the end of the Liturgical Year is only four weeks away. Time just seems to keep flying by.

In today's Gospel story, we heard about an amazing personal encounter between Jesus and a young man named Bartimaeus. I'm pretty sure that for Bartimaeus, time did anything but "fly by". Because of his disability of being blind, for him time probably seemed to stand still; 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 truly "marginalized"; he was a victim, and forced 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 being a **true disciple**. Jesus cured him of his blindness and said: “*Your faith has saved you; go your way.*” But rather than running to his home, or to find his family, or to think about what great options or choices lay open to him

now that he could see, Bartimaeus becomes a true disciple, and began following Jesus “*on the way,*” a “way” that was leading 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 with “time flying by” that we 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’ll keep asking us: “What do you want Me to do for you?” When we are able to answer with the deep, insightful 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 that ability to truly “see.”

God bless you, now and always!

Faithfully yours in Christ,

+ Bishop Paul J. Bradley