

October 27, 2018 4:15 p.m. Hackett Catholic Prep

## **Closing Mass Diocesan New Evangelization Convocation**

### **Vigil, Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Today's readings remind us that our God loves us, is constantly offering us His mercy and forgiveness, and reaching out to us in any and every way to live in unity with Him and with one another.

In our First Reading, Jeremiah, speaking on behalf of the Lord God, kept telling the people to "shout with joy/griten de alegria", "exult", "proclaim your praise". Porque? 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" and Who saw them as "My first-born"!

And that's why the Psalm Response reminds us: "The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with Joy!" – "El Senor ha estado grande con nosotros, y estamos alegres!"

Today's Gospel also is a joyful account of Bartimaeus, the blind beggar—a "nobody" – a young man who, because of his limitation, had no value to anyone – he couldn't work, he had no friends, he seemed to have no family life – he had been relegated to the "sidelines" of society, and forced to become a beggar whom most of the world ignored. But – not Jesus! Pero – no Jesus! Somehow Bartimaeus knew that. He may have been blind, but he was blessed with "spiritual insight" which helped him to know, when he heard that Jesus from Nazareth was passing by – the One whom he had obviously heard so many other people talking about – that's when he decided that the opportunity of his lifetime had come, and so he just started shouting at the top of his lungs, "Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me."

As St. Mark told us, those standing around tried to keep him quiet and rebuked him, but none of that mattered to Bartimaeus – this was his chance, so he just yelled all the louder: "Hijo de David, ten compassion de me!" And Jesus said: "Call him"/"Llamenlo"! Bartimaeus didn't hesitate – He threw off his cloak (one of his very few possessions), sprang up and came to Jesus. Jesus didn't ask for any kind

of introductions, IDs, letters of reference, what his religion was or even if he believed in God? He just asked: “What do you want Me to do for you?”/ Que quieres que haga por ti?”

What a great question. Completely open-ended and very straight forward. That’s a question we should all reflect on – perhaps right before you receive Holy Communion in just a few minutes imagine Jesus asking you that question, and in that, your moment, how will you answer? Bartimaeus didn’t waste a second; he said: “Maestro, que pueda ver!”/Master, I want to see!” And **immediately** he was able to see. Just imagine what that was like! He had his life back. He could now do anything he wanted. He could get a job. Get married. Raise a family. Perhaps get rich. Maybe all of those things flashed in his mind, as Jesus was saying to him: “Vete/Go your way; your faith has saved you!” That encounter had not only given him the gift of physical sight; it had changed him in his very soul. It was a conversion moment, because St. Mark tells us that he did not go his own way; rather, he followed Jesus on His way – he became a joyful, missionary disciple/un discipulo misionero y alegre.

Becoming a disciple of Jesus is what each of us is called to be. We first received that “call” on the day of our baptism. And over the course of our lives, perhaps we find ourselves responding to that call to one degree or another. Maybe there have been times in our lives when we’ve followed Jesus joyfully and willingly; maybe there have been other times when we’ve gone off in different directions, or maybe even have turned our back on Jesus, and the Church. Maybe these last few months of the revelations of the awful scandals in our Church have caused some of you, and perhaps many others, to question their faith. And yet, God continues to “call” us to follow Him, to walk with Him, to be united in Him.

For most of us our “conversion moment” may be more gradual and may be taking place over time, rather than as it happened in such an immediate and dramatic way to Bartimaeus. But the One doing the calling, both to Bartimaeus and to each of us, is the same God Whom we heard about in our First Reading – the One Who calls people back from our own self-imposed captivity caused by sin – the One Who consistently identifies Himself as our Father/Padre nuestro, and helps us to know how valued we are, as though each of us was His precious “first born”.

And that gives us such good reason to say: El Señor ha estado grande con nosotros, y estamos alegres; The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy.

Over the course of today's Convocation, and yesterday as well (for those who were here both days), you've been thinking a lot about this theme of "Walking with Families toward Holiness"/ "Caminando con las Familias Hacia la Santidad".

Pope Francis talks about that image of "walking with" one another as an expression of what true ministry – of what authentic discipleship – is all about. That's what Bartimaeus did – he started walking with Jesus "on the way". As Pope Francis put it so beautifully in his landmark Apostolic Exhortation "Evangelii Gaudium": "The Church which 'goes forth' is a community of missionary disciples who take the first step, who are involved and supportive, who bear fruit and rejoice. An evangelizing community knows that the Lord has taken the initiative, for He has loved us first, and therefore we can move forward, boldly take the initiative, go out to others, seek those who have fallen away, stand at the crossroads and welcome the outcast. Such a community has an endless desire to show mercy. Let us try a little harder to take the first step and to become involved." (#24)

That's what it means to "walk with" another – to accompany them, through the good times and through the challenging times – so that we help one another to do what Bartimaeus did – to follow Jesus on His Way.

Jesus' Way becomes our "way" and that means that it may also include our own "way of the Cross" during times of great difficulty, suffering or confusion. But as long as we are "walking with" those who share our Faith in Jesus, we will find the way to, and thru, the Cross, and into the glory of the Resurrection.

I pray that this Convocation has been an opportunity for you to learn a lot and to gain new insights. I also pray that this Convocation, and this celebration of the Eucharist, helps you to have a good answer to that question Jesus asks you.

If we answer with Bartimaeus, "Master I want to see!" What is it that we want/need to see? Who in our lives do we need to see as Jesus sees them rather than as our purely human sight allows us to see? Let our prayer be that we want to be able to see one another, the people we live with and work with, our neighbors, and those who are strangers – to see all people as Jesus sees them.

I pray that with what you have learned in this Convocation and the insights you have gained, that you will take that and keep responding to the “calling” God keeps making for you to “walk with one another – helping each other to live lives of holiness”, as we follow Jesus on His way; seguimos Jesus por el camino.

May God bless you, now and always/Que Dios te bendiga, ahora y siempre