



Contributed by Fr. James M. Donohue, C.R.

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THIRTIETH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME—YEAR B
October 24, 2021

GATHERING TIME (10-15 Minutes)

Introduction to the Word:

Some years ago, a parishioner asked if she could speak to me after Sunday Eucharist. When we sat down to talk, she began to share a difficulty that she was experiencing in her life. I started to make a few suggestions. This seemed to upset or frustrate her, but she resumed her story. Again, I offered what I thought were some helpful insights. Instead of reacting positively, I could see her frustration growing. Finally, I said, "I can see that you are becoming frustrated. I don't know what you want me to do for you." She replied, "I just want you to listen to me." I thought of this story in relation to the gospel where Jesus does not act until He clarifies what it is that Bartimaeus wants from Him. Jesus asks him directly, "What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus waited to see what Bartimaeus needed, and did not try to anticipate his needs or offer unwelcomed assistance.

I guess I am a slow learner in this regard, but I have often tried to anticipate the needs of others instead of waiting to hear what they desire. Similar to my experience with the parishioner, I have had students come to my office and begin talking. At some point, I would become uncertain of where the conversation would be going. Then, I would ask, "Is there anything in particular that I can do for you?" More than once a student has responded, "No, I just came to talk." Perhaps the insight here is that we might miss the most important thing that we might "do," which is to be present and to listen carefully. This is what Jesus is doing in the gospel passage. He is present to Bartimaeus and is listening closely to him before responding. This process of being present and listening carefully might take patience and adaptability to shift our focus from what we anticipate to what the person needs.

Warm-up Activity: (about 8 to 10 Minutes)

Recall a conversation with someone where he/she was sharing some “story” with you. Do you think that you were listening with patience and understanding? Did you try “to figure out” what the person needed before he/she articulated it? Experts in listening provide a wide range of how we tend to listen: Ignoring, Pretend Listening, Selective Listening, Attentive Listening, and Empathic Listening. Empathic Listening, where we focus with care upon what the person is “really” saying—not just with their words, but with their heart—is the goal that we should strive toward. However, if you are like me, we can tend to advise (give counsel, advice, and solutions to problems), probe (asking questions from our own frame of reference), interpret (trying to figure out people and problems), and evaluate (judging, and either agreeing or disagreeing). All of these tendencies really prevent us from being present to the other and to listen deeply to what is being said.

The Table of the Word

Making the Offering of All the Faithful

The second reading speaks of the high priest making offerings and sacrifices for sins. In light of Vatican II, we understand that the priest today is making an offering of bread and wine *with* and *on behalf of* all the faithful, and that these gifts represent “the fruit of the earth” and “the work of human hands” of all the faithful. The “work” of the faithful in the entire Eucharist is highlighted in paragraph 50 of the *Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy*, which states that: “The rite of the Mass is to be revised in such a way that the intrinsic nature and purpose of its several parts may be more clearly manifested, and that devout and active participation by the faithful may be more easily achieved.” This focus on the full, active, conscious participation of the faithful is highlighted repeatedly in the document on the liturgy. Two places in the liturgy where we find occasion for this participation are: in the restoration of the Prayer of the Faithful, and in the “we” language of the Eucharistic Prayer. In the first case, paragraph 53 of the *Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy* reads: “The ‘common prayer’ or ‘prayer of the faithful’ is to be restored after the Gospel and homily ... here the people are to take part, interceding for the Church, civil authorities, those oppressed, for all humanity, and for the salvation of the world.” In the second case, we should note that the subject throughout the Eucharistic Prayer is “we”: “Make holy, therefore, these gifts, **we** pray ... Therefore, as **we** celebrate ... **we** offer you, Lord ... Humbly, **we** pray that, partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ ... **we** may be gathered ... Have mercy on **us** all, **we** pray ...”. In other words, the priest is praying this Eucharistic Prayer in the name of, and for, all the faithful.

Penitential Rite:

Leader: Aware that God calls us to move from blindness to new sight, let us seek forgiveness and grace to overcome blindness in our own lives.

Lord Jesus, You give sight to the blind. **Lord, have mercy.**

Christ Jesus, You yearn to give us life. **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, You respond to our deepest needs. **Lord, have mercy.**

Let us pray (together)

*God our Saviour, from the ends of the earth you gather the weak and the lowly.
You make them a great and glad multitude, refreshed and renewed at your hand.
Throwing off the burden of sin, they run to the Teacher for healing.
Let the faith Christ bestows restore to the church this vision
of the gathering that embraces the weary and wounded of this earth.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION TIME (45 minutes)

*(As Christians we believe that the **WORD** of God we hear proclaimed each Sunday is an empowering Word, and that God is present in the Word proclaimed. This is the Word that God wants us to hear today. The dynamic of the Small Christian Community, namely, reflecting on our life story within the context of this Word, and sharing the insights of these reflections, is such that God's Spirit becomes present, and the gifts of the Spirit are experienced as empowering and life giving.)*

FIRST READING (Jeremiah 31:7-9)

Thus says the Lord: "Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob, and raise shouts for the chief of the nations; proclaim, give praise, and say, 'Save, O Lord, your people, the remnant of Israel.'

"See, I am going to bring them from the land of the north, and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth, among them those who are blind and those who are lame, those with child and those in labour, together; a great company, they shall return here.

"With weeping they shall come, and with consolations I will lead them back, I will let them walk by brooks of water, in a straight path in which they shall not stumble; for I have become a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn."

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

SECOND READING (Hebrews 5:1-6)

Every high priest chosen from among men is put in charge of things pertaining to God on their behalf, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He is able to deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is subject to weakness; and because of this he must offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of the people. And one does not presume to take this honour, but takes it only when called by God, just as Aaron was.

So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"; as he says also in another place, "You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek."

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL (Mark 10:46-52)

As Jesus and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Jesus stood still and said, "Call him here." And they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart; get up, he is calling you." So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus.

Then Jesus said to him, “What do you want me to do for you?” The blind man said to him, “My teacher, let me see again.” Jesus said to him, “Go; your faith has made you well.”

Immediately the man regained his sight and followed Jesus on the way.

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

COMMENTARY:

First Reading:

One of the greatest disasters in the history of Israel was the conquest and deportation of the inhabitants of Jerusalem and its surrounding areas by the Babylonians in 597 and 586 BCE. The people of Israel ended up being in exile in Babylon for about 70 years before they eventually returned home. Looking back at the years leading up to this exile, Israel came to realize that they were suffering the bad consequences of choices that they made not to follow God and God’s ways. In particular, the kings were most unfaithful to God, placing their trust in foreign military and political machinations and intrigue. Jeremiah was one of the prophets who proclaimed a message of hope for Israel. He prophesied that Israel should trust that God would bring them back, gathering them from the furthest ends of the earth. This event of great rejoicing would include even those who we might think would have difficulty making this trek: the blind, the lame, those with child, and even those in labour. God is like a parent who would care for Israel, God’s firstborn.

Second Reading:

This reading makes clear, in a very succinct fashion, how high priests were to carry out the ministry entrusted to them. When dealing with those the reading refers to as the “ignorant and wayward,” the high priest is to do so “gently.” Why? Because the high priest himself, as a human, is also “subject to weakness,” to sinfulness. In response to this reality, when the high priest offers sacrifice for the sins of others, he is also to offer sacrifice for “his own sins as well.” Further, a high priest does not choose this role for himself; he is chosen by God to carry out this service. Within this context, our reading broaches the issue of Jesus as high priest. The author has previously stated (Heb 4:15) that Jesus as high priest is able to sympathize with our weaknesses because He is like us in all things, but sin. Now the author points out that like other high priests, such as Aaron, Jesus does not take this role upon Himself, but is appointed by God in sonship (“You are my Son, today I have begotten you” [Ps 2:7] and in service (“You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek” [Ps 110:4]). Jesus is obedient to God’s will, accepting the role of high priest who will ultimately make the sacrifice of Himself for the sake of all, “ignorant and wayward” as we are.

Gospel Reading:

The gospel reading brings to a conclusion three lessons in discipleship in Mark 8-10. In each lesson, Jesus indicates that He must go to Jerusalem to suffer and die. In response to this message, Mark includes three separate incidents that reveal the disciples’ misunderstanding of Jesus and what it means to be one of His followers. Finally, in response, Jesus provides a “saying” about discipleship in the form of a paradox, revealing what a true disciple should be. These lessons are provided within the backdrop of the disciples being “on the way.” Indeed, they are on a physical journey with Jesus, but they are also “on the way” of discovering what it is to be a disciple. Schematically, the lessons look like this:

Mark 8:27-38	Passion prediction	Peter: Don't go!	Lose your life to save your life.
Mark 9:30-37	Passion prediction	Disciples arguing who is the greatest	If you want to be first, you must be last.
Mark 10:32-45	Passion prediction	James and John request seats at right and left	Whoever wishes to be great must be the servant.

Our gospel reading today stands in contrast to the last of these stories. Jesus had previously asked James and John: “What do you want me to do for you?” They asked for seats at His right and His left when He would come in glory—right after talking about His upcoming suffering and death! In contrast, Bartimaeus responds to the same question with a request to be able to see. This sight, of course, is not only *physical* sight, but also the ability *to see with the eyes of faith*, to see what it takes to follow Jesus as a disciple. Mark concludes this story with a succinct verse: “Immediately the man regained his sight and followed Jesus on the way.” He is a real disciple ... following on the way.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION:

1. (*Jeremiah 31:7-9*) ***“Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob”***

The remnant of Israel—the blind, lame, children, those in labour, the entire company—will be gathered together around the waters of new life, walking on the path that has nothing on it to cause anyone to stumble, towards the Father of Israel. As they make this journey, they will be singing songs of gladness—a ceremonial parade if you will, where tears of joy will be shed as they experience the consolation of God. What does this image evoke in your mind and heart? Try to imagine the emotions these people were experiencing as they journeyed from the slavery of exile to the freedom of God.

2. (*Hebrews 5:1-6*) ***“Offer sacrifice for his own sins”***

Hebrews reminds the high priests that they too are human, capable of sin. This awareness of one's own sin is to cause the high priests to deal gently and compassionately with those who come before them in need of God's mercy and forgiveness. In their prayers, they are to seek forgiveness for the sins of those they are charged to minister to, AND to offer prayers for the forgiveness of their own sins. What a powerful exhortation to the high priests! In your interactions with your family and friends, especially with those seeking your forgiveness, do you apply this exhortation from Hebrews to be gentle and compassionate? Is this something you find challenging to live in your life? Any example you would like to share?

3. (*Mark 10:46-52*) ***“Followed Jesus on the way”***

Did the restoration of sight to Bartimaeus open your eyes of faith in any way, even just a little bit? Bartimaeus was moved to follow Jesus to Jerusalem for Passover and ultimately the revelation of salvation. What do you feel this miracle is asking you to move towards? What new insight into your life of faith does this miracle reveal? Do you still feel elements of blindness in your life of faith? Discuss.

CARING-PRAYING TIME: (*15-20 minutes*)

1. **Word of the Week:** ***“Go; your faith has made you well.”***

2. **Suggestion for the Week:**

Blindness touches our lives in all kinds of ways, some we are aware of, others not so much. We can be blind to the graces and richness that God has bestowed upon others; we can be blind to the graces and riches God has given us; we can be blind to the creative beauty of God in the world around us; we can be blind to the face of God that stands before us. Reflect upon what you think is the root cause of this type of blindness. How does one overcome blindness of this sort?

3. **Intercessions:** (Response: **Lord, hear our prayer**)

Leader: Through Jesus, the Son of David, let us pray in faith for all God's people.

That God may gather from the farthest parts of the earth a faithful remnant to proclaim and give praise to God's name, we pray to the Lord...

That nations may not stumble on the path that leads to peace but walk to that goal by the straight path of justice and mutual respect, we pray to the Lord...

That Christians may never neglect or silence those who cry out for help but gladly share with them the resources the Lord has given us, we pray to the Lord...

That those who are bereaved may pass through their time of weeping and receive the consolations of a faith community that cares and supports, we pray to the Lord...

That our faithful departed may be gathered to that great company whom God will lead to the waters of eternal life, we pray to the Lord...

For Pope Francis' monthly intention that every baptized person may be engaged in evangelization, available to the mission, by being witnesses of a life that has the flavour of the Gospel, we pray to the Lord...

How can we help you in prayer this week?

Let us pray (together)

*O God, light to the blind and joy to the afflicted,
in your only-begotten Son you have given us a high priest who is just and compassionate
toward those who groan beneath the burden of oppression and sorrow.*

*Listen, then, to the cry of our prayer:
May all who are in need recognize you in Jesus of Nazareth
and gladly follow Jesus on the way that leads to you.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

With hands and hearts united in gratitude for God's favours today, we pray that all those in our influence be moved to be open to your Word and your Spirit, while we pray as one, **OUR FATHER**

Celebrating the Word, Resurrection Ministries of the Congregation of the Resurrection Ontario-Kentucky Province (including the former Resurrection Centre), 265 Westmount Road North, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada N2L 3G7. ([Celebrating the Word](#) was founded by Father Frank Ruetz, C.R. deceased 2012). For information: **website:** www.resurrectionists.ca. **Email:** provincialoffice@resurrectioncollege.ca The Scripture version used in this commentary is the [New Revised Standard Version](#) (copyrighted by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA).