

HOMILY SUNDAY 30 – B (Homily 02)\*

“Seeing With the Eyes of Faith”

(Jeremiah 31:7-9; Psalm 126; Hebrews 5:1-6; Mark 10:46-52)

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Fr. Pat Martin is a legally blind priest who gave a retreat in Pine House, Saskatchewan some years back. He thanked God for his blindness because it brought him closer to God and helped him to see who God is more clearly.

Today we are invited to see Jesus with the eyes of faith, and to put our complete trust in Him.

The last issue of *Celebrate*, a Canadian magazine on Liturgy, offers some interesting insights into today’s readings. The writer claims that this gospel story is similar to the healing of the blind man of Bethsaida (8:22-26). Mark uses these two stories of new sight to frame the whole section (8:22-10:52) dealing with Jesus’ predictions of the passion and the disciples’ misunderstanding. Eyes must be opened – both the disciples’ and ours – to see the true meaning of Jesus’ messianic suffering and so correctly follow him on this new way to life with God.

The story of the healing of blind Bartimaeus is filled with vivid detail. Bartimaeus calls Jesus *Son of David*, a title that alludes to Jesus’ true identity as the promised messiah. Although blind, Bartimaeus can *see* Jesus more clearly than others because of his faith. Given the assertive character of Bartimaeus, Mark is reminding us that if we now have really understood what Jesus had been teaching us over the last few Sundays about discipleship, and if we are sure that we want to follow Jesus, then maybe we need to be more bold and more single-minded when it comes to being like Jesus and standing for what Jesus stood for. Mark knew well that following Jesus was not for the faint-of-heart – and it still is not today.

Mark stresses that a Christian disciple is one who can take up his or her cross and follow Jesus on this way of suffering. Any other claim to discipleship – from family ties, being one of the twelve apostles, having a personal knowledge of Jesus or simply belonging to a religious community or tradition, will always end in failure. Jesus offers no quick fix or easy comfort. The only solution is to take up one’s cross as Jesus did, for only by living through suffering and death does resurrection follow. Suffering is not the end but the door to a new existence with God, who never abandons us.

For biblical commentator Harrington, this is a miracle of faith leading to sight. The cloak was blind Bartimaeus' only status, his permission to beg. He throws it away before Jesus heals him, in faith. We must let go of old securities and embrace the new, the unimaginable. This is a transition passage, preparing for the revealing of the humble Messiah and the true nature of his messiahship in Jerusalem. So now there is no need for secrecy - when Jesus is acclaimed as *Son of David* he calls the man to him, heals him and allows him to follow. This miracle of sight is meant to heal his disciples, and us, of our blindness. It takes faith to recognize the mercy and pity of the Son of David and follow him in the way of humble discipleship.

At the age of 45, Raymond has just joined a religious community. Throughout his successful career in business, there was always something missing. Now he delights in being part of a community of like-minded persons and in the study of theology, which is all new to him. He has put his career on hold, has sacrificed a hefty income and given up a lot of his recreational activities to pursue this new path that faith has placed before him. He is truly looking at life with the eyes of faith, as he sets out to follow Jesus more closely.

The Eucharist that we celebrate now is also a tremendous act of faith. We see humble gifts of bread and wine with the eyes of faith, transformed into the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. Beyond that, we are transformed ourselves into his Body as we receive communion, listen to His Word, and are sent out to live the Eucharist in everyday life.