

Sunday, October 28, 2018

30th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading Jeremiah 31:7-9

2nd Reading: Hebrews 5:1-6

Responsorial: Psalm 126:1-6

Gospel: Mark 10:46-52

Saying Yes to Jesus' Call to Follow Him and No to the Call to Follow the Things of the World

He began to cry out. (Mark 10:47)

Bartimaeus makes it perfectly clear: when we really want something, we will push through the obstacles in order to get it.

Bartimaeus pushed through the opposition of the crowd that tried to keep him from Jesus. He wanted to be healed, and nothing would stop him. In a similar way, the “crowds” of the world seem to want to keep us from Jesus and from receiving his healing touch. They are telling us to be content with who we are. “Jesus can’t help you,” they tell us, “so just accept the status quo instead.”

The problem is, what the world offers can leave us restless, unfulfilled, always searching, always looking for the next best thing to make us happy. All too often, our desires for God’s peace and love become fleeting moments that get shouted down by the influence of the crowd.

Each day, in certain ways, we face opposition similar to what Bartimaeus faced. He was wrapped in a “cloak” of comfort (Mark 10:50). The crowd told him to stay put and to be content with his blindness. “Jesus cannot help you; you’re not worth his time.” But Bartimaeus was desperate. He refused to listen to the crowd. As a result, Jesus heard him, and Bartimaeus gladly threw off his cloak and ran to where Jesus could wrap him in divine love.

Follow Bartimaeus’ example! The crowds of the world want all of your time, but you don’t have to follow them. Today and every day, you can throw aside the “cloak” of partial comfort and spring up to meet Jesus (Mark 10:50). Let him wrap you in a cloak of grace and healing.

Remember this as well: while the crowds of the world want to keep you from Jesus, there are also crowds of disciples who want to follow him. They can help you grow in your faith. Find people who pray together. Find a Bible study. Join people who serve the poor. Surround yourself with people who share your desire for Jesus. Join them as you follow Jesus “on the way” (Mark 10:52).

“Open my eyes, Lord, to the disciples around me.”

(Many thanks to *The Word Among Us* (www.wau.org) for allowing us to use meditations from their monthly devotional magazine. Used with permission.)

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Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion:

1. The first reading begins with these prophetic words of Jeremiah: *Thus says the LORD: Shout with joy for Jacob, exult at the head of the nations; proclaim your praise and say: The LORD has delivered his people, the remnant of Israel. Behold, I will bring them back from the land of the north; I will gather them from the ends of the world.*
 - Why do you think the prophet Jeremiah urged the people of Israel to shout joyfully and exult over what God has accomplished and will accomplish for them?
 - What has the Lord done in your life that causes you to gratefully and joyfully exalt Him?
2. The responsorial psalm repeats the theme of the first reading: *When the LORD brought back the captives of Zion, we were like men dreaming. Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with rejoicing. Then they said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them."*
 - The psalm describes how *When the Lord brought back the captives of Zion*, God's people were not only filled with joy, but also *our mouth was filled with laughter*. Why do you think this was so?
 - How would you describe how we, the people of God, have also been delivered from "captivity"?
 - In what way is your relationship with Jesus Christ a great source of joy for you? What steps can you take to deepen that relationship?
3. The second reading from the Letter to the Hebrews describes the characteristics of the Jewish high priest: *Every high priest is taken from among men and made their representative before God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He is able to deal patiently with the ignorant and erring, for he himself is beset by weakness and so, for this reason, must make sin offerings for himself as well as for the people. No one takes this honor upon himself but only when called by God, just as Aaron was.* It also describes the call of Jesus Christ, our High Priest: *In the same way, it was not Christ who glorified himself in becoming high priest, but rather the one who said to him: "You are my son: this day I have begotten you;" just as he says in another place: "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek."*
 - How would you describe the differences between the Jewish high priest and Jesus Christ, our high priest?
 - In what ways do these differences have such an impact on the effect of the sin offering of the Jewish high priests, who *must make sin offerings for himself as well as for the people*, as compared to Jesus' offering of himself on the cross for our sins (see Hebrews 9:13-14)?
 - How can reflecting on these truths at Mass make a difference in its impact on your life?
4. In the Gospel reading, we hear of the healing of Bartimaeus: *Bartimaeus, a blind man, the son of Timaeus, sat by the roadside begging. On hearing that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, son of David, have pity on me." And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he kept calling out all the more, "Son of David, have pity on me."* Here is how Jesus responded to Bartimaeus: *Jesus said to him in reply, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man replied to him, "Master, I want to see." Jesus told him, "Go your way; your faith has saved you." Immediately he received his sight and followed him on the way.*
 - Why do you think Bartimaeus kept asking for help from Jesus even when rebuked by the disciples to keep quiet?
 - Bartimaeus was rewarded for his persistence and his faith? How persistent (and consistent) are you in prayer?
 - Jesus first words to Bartimaeus were, *"What do you want me to do for you?"* Bartimaeus answers, *"Master, I want to see."* How would you respond if Jesus asked you this same question?
5. The meditation opens with these words: *Bartimaeus makes it perfectly clear: when we really want something, we will push through the obstacles in order to get it. Bartimaeus pushed through the opposition of the crowd that tried to keep him from Jesus.* The meditation ends with these words: *Remember this as well: while the crowds of the world want to keep you from Jesus, there are also crowds of disciples who want to follow him. They can help you grow in your faith. Find people who pray together. Find a Bible study. Join people who serve the poor. Surround yourself with people who share your desire for Jesus. Join them as you follow Jesus "on the way."*
 - How would you describe the obstacles or difficulties that keep you "from Jesus and from receiving his healing touch" and from letting him "wrap you in a cloak of grace and healing"?
 - How can you put the ending words of the meditation into greater practice in your life?

Take some time now to pray and ask the Lord to show you how you can journey together more closely with other "disciples" in following and serving him. Use the prayer below from the end of the meditation as the starting point.

"Open my eyes, Lord, to the disciples around me."

[The discussion questions were created by Maurice Blumberg, who is currently a member of the board of directors of the ChristLife Catholic Ministry for Evangelization (www.christlife.org), a member of the National Service Committee Council of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (www.nsc-chariscenter.org), and a board member of The Love of Christ Foundation. Prior to this, Maurice was the founding executive director of the National fellowship of Catholic Men, a chairman of the board of *The Word Among Us* (www.wau.org), and a director of partner relations for The Word Among Us Partners ministry. He can be contacted at mblumberg@wau.org or mblumberg@aol.com.]