

30B SML 2018
MK 10:46-52

One reason that prevents us from being truly ourselves and “finding our own way,” (and I’ll come back to “finding our own way”) is we do not realize the extent to which we are blind. We do not realize we are on the outside looking in. We don’t realize that in finding “our own way” we are not necessarily following “the Way.” If only we knew that we were blind, how eagerly would we seek to see, first, as Bartimaeus probably did, from men:

- ✓ doctors,
- ✓ priests
- ✓ wholistic healers
- ✓ soothsayers
- ✓ you name it.

Then, having lost all hope “in princes, in the sons of men in whom there is no salvation,” says Psalms 146(:3), we turn to God. But the tragedy is that we do not realize our blindness. The many things visible before us distract us, and command our attention, so we do not see things invisible, as in the Creed we will profess in a few minutes:

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

Blinded by the world of things we can see, we forget that things visible do not match the depth of which man is capable, namely, the things we cannot see.

Man is both small and great. When we think of ourselves in an ever-expanding universe, immeasurably big and infinite, we see ourselves as:

- ✓ a speck of dust,
- ✓ transient,
- ✓ frail,
- ✓ of no account;

However, when we turn inwards, we discover that nothing in this immensity is great enough to completely fill us – the whole created world then becomes:

- ✓ the speck of dust,
- ✓ passing,
- ✓ frail,
- ✓ and of no account,

because, the truth is, we are too vast for the universe to fill, or should I say, fulfill us. Why? - because the things of the world have an opacity, a density, a weight and a volume, but have no

depth. Only God can fill us. Only God can fulfill us. It is only when we have understood the difference between a presence that asserts itself (things visible) and a presence that we have to seek because we sense in our hearts what we cannot see (things invisible), do we understand the difference between the heavy, opaque density of the world around us, and the human depth which only God can fulfill.

Every one of us is blinded by the visible which prevents us from seeing the invisible.

- ✓ As were the passers-by who, when they saw Bartimaeus, were blinded with the eyes of indifference, so are we blind;
- ✓ As was Philip who, when he saw the multitude, did a quick calculation on how much it would cost to feed them, was blinded by the eyes of frugality, so are we blind;
- ✓ As were the scribes and Pharisees who were ready to cast their stones, blinded by the eyes loving every minute embarrassing the adulterous woman, so are we blind;
- ✓ As was the angry crowd who shouted crucify, blinded by the eyes of hatred, so are we blind;

Since the blind man Bartimaeus was blind to the visible, he was not distracted by things visible. Because he was blind

to the visible, he was painfully aware he was blind to the invisible. He knew he was on “the outside looking in.”

Once we realize we are blind, once we realize we are on the outside looking in, we can move from something that is imaginary to something that is very real.

Right now:

- ✓ we picture our eternal home with Our Blessed Lord;
- ✓ we imagine warming our hands by the eternal life of the Holy Spirit;
- ✓ we endeavor to share in the life that is still out of reach

So we take our stand where the Gospel tells us to begin, before a door which is still shut to us, never wearying of knocking until it opens. Like Bartimaeus, we cry out to God, seeking the way until it unfolds before us like a path to heaven.

Where we learn to focus on the invisible, where we change from being on the “outside looking in” to being on the “inside looking out” is the Church.

The story of Bartimaeus, rooted in a real encounter, is a beautiful icon of the Church. For a first century Jew, Jericho would carry with it the connotation of sin and corruption, since it was the city whose walls came down so that the conquering Israelites could enter. Therefore, Bartimaeus, sitting in

blindness by the walls of Jericho, evokes us being in the region of the outside looking in, lost in our sin and unable to see the world aright.

Jesus calls Bartimaeus, gathering him into the community of the church, thereby giving him sight and enabling to walk the right path. The Church is that community whereby we learn, through Christ, how to see and how to walk. In the ancient world, when a young man joined a philosophical school, say Plato's academy, he was not simply enrolling in a series of classes or course lectures in Platonic philosophy. He was signing on for an entire style of life, involving practices and bodily disciplines, as well as new patterns of thought. We find something very similar in the Acts of the Apostles, where the early Christian Church is referred to as "the Way," (AA 24:14), a term that catches this practical, embodied dimension of the Catholic "way of" life. The Church is that society, that mystical body, in which we learn to see from the inside looking out, with the eyes of Christ and to walk the path that Christ walked. To live with Christ and to live like Christ, in a Catholic way of life.

Hence the reason why Bartimaeus could cry out to the Lord in utter despair, with all the desperate hope he felt as salvation was passing him by. His heart was pure, and so he

embodied the beatitude, “Blest are the pure of heart, for they shall see God.” (MT 5:8). And note, that once he received his sight, he did not look here and there or take off to make up for all that he missed. No. Realizing he was now on the “inside (of the Church) and looking out,” the Gospel says, “He immediately received his sight and followed him on ‘the way.’”