

Father O'Connor's Homily for 24 October 2021
Thirtieth Ordinary Sunday – B

Jeremiah 31: 7-9

Hebrews 5: 1-6

Mark 10: 46-52

I want to thank the many members of our Saint Joseph and Nativity Parishes who have returned their Stewardship Commitment Cards. If you haven't returned your card as of yet, we ask you to do so as soon as you can with your time, talent and treasure decisions for the next twelve months.

Last weekend we announced the Heart of a Shepherd Campaign which is taking place in our Diocese, and now in our Saint Joseph and Nativity Parishes. For us it will be two separate campaigns that will take place simultaneously.

The Heart of a Shepherd Campaign is an opportunity over three years time to raise funds in support of our seminarians and our newly-ordained priests and our retired priests, as well as to support our parishes. Sixty-five cents of every dollar we raise will return to each of our two parishes. And at the top of our local need-list is a new roof for both churches.

Last Tuesday evening, Nativity Parish hosted an informational reception for both of our parishes. This Monday evening, 25 October, at 7:00 PM Saint Joseph Parish will host an identical reception in the Social Hall. Even if you have not RSVP'd, Nativity and Saint Joseph parishioners are most welcome and encouraged to attend this less-than-an-hour get-together. I look forward to seeing you!

Prince Eugene [1663-1736] was born short in stature, rather sickly and with a hunchback. He lived in France in the court of King Louis XIV [1638-1715] and just about everyone ignored him.

One day Prince Eugene asked King Louis XIV to commission him in the army, but the king would not even look at him. So eventually Eugene left France and joined the Austrian army. By the age of 40, Eugene was commander-in-chief of the Austrian army and became, as the story goes, a real pain-in-the-neck to Louis XIV, who later admitted that Eugene was one of the greatest commanders that Europe had ever known.

Now what does Prince Eugene have to do with Bartimaeus in today's Gospel, you may be asking. This: they were both disadvantaged and ignored.

Bartimaeus was blind and he was a beggar. These were days before Braille and schools for the blind, seeing-eye dogs, talking books and cornea transplants. All that Bartimaeus could expect out of life was to beg.

And he was ignored. "Bartimaeus" means "son of Timaeus." We do not even know his first name. He was called "Timaeus's boy." That was like us saying "the Smith girl" or "the Jones boy." How impersonal!

A family had found a cat. They put an ad in the paper, looking for its owner. They described the cat as being "brown with a white face and white paws and answering to the name, 'Go Away.'" That's what people were saying to Bartimaeus: "Go away, Timaeus's boy."

Bartimaeus was disadvantaged. But aren't we disadvantaged too? We all have our disadvantages, whether they be physical, mental, emotional or even attitudinal. We can even be disadvantaged by privilege, because those privileges can sometimes keep us from acquiring the strength needed to deal with the hard things in life.

There was a plant manager who had a sign on his office door that read: "If you have problems, come on in and talk with me. If you don't have problems, come on in and tell me how you do it."

Bartimaeus was disadvantaged, but he was also determined to see Jesus. He was sitting by the roadside waiting for Jesus to come by. And when Jesus was near, Bartimaeus cried out, "Jesus, son of David, have pity on me."

The crowd told him to be quiet. But he shouted all the louder, "Son of David, have pity on me." To those trying to listen to Jesus' teaching, the shouting of Bartimaeus was an offence. They tried to silence him, but no one was going to rob him of his one chance to escape from his world of darkness.

Jesus heard him and said to the crowd, "Call him." Notice how the mood of the crowd changed. They now said to Bartimaeus, "Take courage. Get up. Jesus is calling you." And the Gospel says that Bartimaeus "threw aside his cloak, sprang up, and came to Jesus." Bartimaeus' response to the call of Jesus was eager and immediate. Certain opportunities come our way only once. Bartimaeus knew that.

Jesus looks at Bartimaeus and says, “What do you want me to do for you?” And Bartimaeus answers, “Master, I want to see.”

Bartimaeus knew precisely what he wanted: his sight. Too often peoples’ admiration for Jesus is only a vague attraction. When we go to our doctors, we want them to deal with some definite problem. When we go to our dentists we do not ask them to root canal any tooth, but only the one that is hurting. And it should be so with us and Jesus. And this involves regular self-examination. When we go to Jesus, if we are confident like Bartimaeus, things will happen – in God’s own way, but things will happen.

How would you answer if Jesus were to stand before you right now and ask you: “What do you want me to do for you?” What is the deepest need of your life at this moment?

I doubt that your answer would be: to be the richest person in the world, or to live in the biggest house, or to take vacations twice every month. These are nice thoughts, but they are not really our deepest needs.

“What do you want me to do for you?” Bartimaeus knew what he wanted. And now he had his chance. “Master, I want to see.” And Jesus told him, “Go your way. Your faith has saved you.” And “immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus on the way.”

I suspect that after he was cured, Bartimaeus began to realize that not only were his eyes opened by Jesus but also his heart. Bartimaeus had suffered not only from his blindness but also from rejection by people around him who told him, “Go away, Timaeus’s boy!”

Bartimaeus may have been a beggar by the wayside, but he was now a man of gratitude. Having received his sight, he did not selfishly go his own way. He stayed and followed Jesus. Bartimaeus began with a need, went on to gratitude, and finished with loyalty. And that is a perfect summary of the stages of discipleship.

Listen to Jesus say to you today, “What do you want me to do for you?” And then, with faith and with confidence, don’t be afraid to tell Him.