# “Restoration”

The theme of all our readings today is ***“Restoration.”*** St. Francis of Assisi heard Jesus say, ***“Rebuild my Church”*** Our Lord could have used a similar word such as, **‘*restore’*** my Church. Restoration means to return something that has gone bad to its original good condition. It means to bring back what was lost. It means to heal a broken people who had left the right path and are now going in the wrong direction. It means, people who became blind because of going after worldly things, now, are called to return to God’s way so they can be restored.

Destruction is not God’s final plan for His people. His final plan is restoration. His people moved away from His ways, by worshiping idols and things created instead of the Creator. They turned from doing good to doing evil, from speaking the truth to deceitfulness, from going after peace to going after strive. However, God is still in search of His people. He is in search of the remnant, so He could bring them back to Himself after their repentance. At the appointed time, God sent His only begotten Son so that the remnant could live according to the spirit and not according to the flesh.

As an introduction, prophet, Jeremiah was from a priestly family. His roots could be traced to the priestly line of Abiathar, to Eli, and as far back as to Moses. He was commanded by God not to have a wife or children (Jer 16:1-4). Though he came from the northern kingdom, he ministered in the southern kingdom of Judah. Jeremiah used the imagery of a family to express God’s compassion and anger in dealing with His people. With God’s authority, Jeremiah was sent in judgment, to pull up, pull down, to destroy and to overthrow. Regarding restoration, to build and to plant.

Restoration comes after conversion of heart and a deeper sense of faith in God. It embodies deeper love for God and loyalty to God. Jeremiah had been a prophet who preached mostly about repentance and the consequences of disobedience to the will of God. His preaching was so counter cultural for the people to accept that he was persecuted many times. In response to his persecution, he wrote his lamentations or confessions exemplified by the famous line: **“You seduced me, LORD, and I let myself be seduced; you were too strong for me, and you prevailed. All day long I am an object of laughter; everyone mocks me (Jer. 20:7).**

In our first reading, we heard from Prophet Jeremiah the good news of God’s desire to restore the remnant of the house of Israel. It was at the appointed time that God would bring back the remnant from exile. They had served as slaves to the Babylonians and had repented of their ways. They had returned to God in their suffering. Now God brought them back to their home land as free people from slavery. The imagery we received is of festivity and joy. God would once again provide them with the comfort of His created things in their own home land.

In our second reading, we are given what high priests are responsible for. They are to offer gifts and sacrifices for the forgiveness of sins so there could be reconciliation and restoration of the people they represent. As representatives of the people, it is presumed that the human priests experience and model a profound identity with their people in every way, including sin. The high priest must share in the lives, hopes, and fears of their people completely.

As the representative of God, the high priest must be compassionate, patient and project the mercy of God on to the people they serve. It is a calling by God and no one should call himself a high priest unless chosen by God through apostolic succession. A high priest is chosen by God to be an intermediary between God and His people.

The high priest is chosen to represent the one and only sacrifice offered on Calvary for our redemption. Summarily, a high priest must be able to trace his call in a similar way as all the priests that followed Aron (which became the Leviticus line) could in the Hebrew Bible. In a similar way, all high priests made representatives of the people after Jesus Christ must be able to trace their call to Jesus’ call through the apostles in the New Testament.

In our Gospel reading, we come across the story of both the physical and spiritual restoration of a blind man Bartimaeus. Bartimaeus a blind man near Jericho, one day, was sitting by the road side when he heard lots of commotion. On finding out that it was Jesus of Nazareth who was passing by on His way to Jerusalem to celebrate the feat of Passover, Bartimaeus realizing the occasion as one in a life time opportunity. He began to shout **“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.”** The people around him tried to silence him, but he turned up the volume of his plea to Jesus. His blindness was replaced by his faith in Jesus that He would heal him.

In the end, Jesus heard his plea and asked him to come over. Symbolically, Bartimaeus threw aside is cloak signifying a new beginning. He threw away the old cloak so he could receive a new one from Jesus. He threw away his old self for a new self with Jesus. Seeing that Bartimaeus was blind, Jesus asked, **“What do you want me to do for you?”** Bartimaeus responded, **“Master, I want to see.”** Bartimaeus then heard words he would never forget, **“Go your faith has saved you.”** However, Bartimaeus refused to “Go,” instead he followed Jesus on his way to Jerusalem. So it is with everyone who has an encounter with Jesus, you are changed for life.

Bartimaeus represents all of us in one way or another. If anyone is challenged by his/her sight, rejoice, Jesus will restore his/her sight. If anyone is considered insignificant, Bartimaeus is a good example that the future will tell their great story. If anyone is poor or jobless, Bartimaeus is a good example of being poor and having the future holds some good news. If anyone is depressed by the circumstances of their life, Bartimaeus: is a good example that there is light at the end of the tunnel.

If one is in need of God’s mercy, Bartimaeus is a good example, because forgiveness will soon be experienced. If one’s prayer seems not to be heard by God, Bartimaeus is a good example that perseverance will never fail him or her. If one’s cry for help is ignored by family, friends and society, Bartimaeus is a good example because Jesus is different from our family and friends.

As we come to receive Jesus in the Eucharist, let us ask Him for a faith as strong as that of Bartimaeus