

PASTOR'S WEEKLY MESSAGE FOR THE 30TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME B

“What do you want Me to do for you?”

In the Gospel, we are told of a blind beggar called Bartimaeus. He hears that Jesus of Nazareth is coming. So, he starts shouting: “Son of David, Jesus, have pity on me.” Many of the people around tried to make him keep quiet and stop shouting. But, “he only shouted all the louder.” What does he want; what do you think a blind man will ask for? Money...yes, Bartimaeus was begging. But he wanted more than that. And now, there comes somebody from whom he hopes to get...not money, but something much more precious. The Gospel text continues in this way: “Jesus stopped and said: “Call him here.” So, they called the blind man. He jumped up and went to Jesus. Then, Jesus spoke: “What do you want Me to do for you, Rabbuni?” The blind man said to Him: “Master, let me see again.” That blind man wanted to see, to see clearly. To see everything around. To see things and people as they are. When Jesus asked him what he wanted, we do not see him hesitating at all. He knew, well, what he wanted; what he needed.

Think for a moment... If Jesus came around asking each one of us ‘What do you want Me to do for you?’ perhaps some of us would say: ‘*Lord, I need more money*’ or ‘*Lord, give me a better job*’ or ‘*heal me from this sickness*’ or ‘*help me to get out of these difficulties.*’ Would there be anyone among us who would ask exactly for what Bartimaeus asked for? “Master let me see again.” There are different kinds of blindness. Most of us are unable to see certain things in our lives; in ourselves. At times, we do not see because we are afraid of what we would find out if we really looked. Fear prevents us from seeing. I am afraid that you do not agree with me on certain things, so I try to avoid you. But, I am also afraid of being known as an unfriendly person, so I do not admit to myself that I avoid you, I am blind.

At other times, laziness is what blocks our vision. If we saw certain things, we would need to do something about them. We do not want this. For example, I do not like to work in the field. I prefer to stay around the house and do small jobs. If I agreed to see, I would have to admit that I leave most of the work of cultivating to my wife. But, I prefer to be blind on that point. It happens that selfishness is what blinds us. We like to think of ourselves only; of what gives us pleasure and comfort. If we were not selfish, we would have to think of those in need around us. But, we do not want to notice the poor because it is demanding to notice the needs of people. So, we keep our eyes on what pleases us. We are blind. Of course, pride is another cause of blindness in many of us. Because we are proud, we do not like to see what is wrong with us and what is good in others. We like to see things the other way around...we notice only the good in ourselves and the bad in others. I am too proud to accept that I need your forgiveness when I have offended you. So, I prefer to deceive myself into believing that you would not forgive me anyway.

Still, other times, prejudice is what closes our eyes. Prejudice means that I have made up my mind about something and I am not going to change, not even if I find out that things are otherwise. Prejudice does not allow us to change our opinion even when we see it to be wrong. When I am prejudiced, I keep believing that my neighbor is a dishonest man because I saw him taking 20 dollars from the collection money on Sunday. I still believe this even when the priest, himself, has said that he sent that person to take the money to go and buy something. I say to myself: ‘*Oh, the priest is only excusing him. I know that he is a dishonest man. I am not ready to adjust my thinking to the truth offered to me.*’ So now, you see what I mean when I say that there are those areas of blindness in most of us. And, we need first to be honest to accept this. And, we also need courage to bring our blindness to Jesus, as Bartimaeus did.

We need courage to say to Jesus: “*Lord, let me see again, let me see all that You want me to see. And, let me see as You want me to see. The way that You, Lord, see people and situations. Heal the blindness in me—the blindness that is there because of my fear, my laziness, my selfishness, my pride, and my prejudice—whatever causes the blindness, help me to take it away, Lord.*”