

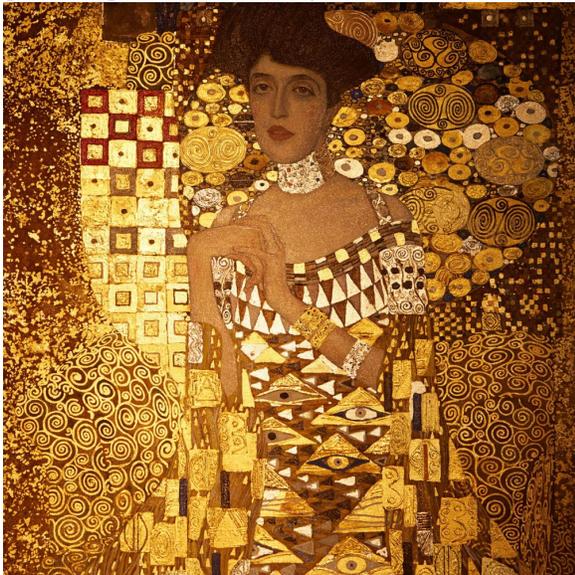
30th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Cycle B, 10.25.15

Jeremiah 31:7-9/Hebrews 5:1-6/Mark 10:46-52

SEEING WITH THE EYES OF FAITH, HOPE & LOVE

Clarity of vision – that's something we all long for and we all need, yet something that can be so illusive in our personal lives, in society and in the Church. There is a wonderful movie entitled **Woman in Gold** -- a powerful film about great art, horrific crimes, and inspiring perseverance. It tells the story of Maria Altmann, a proud, Austrian Jewish woman who convinces a young attorney to help her regain **Woman in Gold**, a painting of her aunt by the artist Gustav Klimt, made when Maria was a little girl living with her family in Austria.



The priceless canvas, as well as thousands of other valuable artwork, was looted by the Nazis before Maria and her husband fled Austria. The rather imperious Maria is convinced of the righteousness of her cause, but the attorney, Randy Schoenberg, the son of Maria's best friend, at first wants no part of this wild goose chase. The attorney knows nothing about art restitution law; he has just begun a demanding new job, he's saddled with debt after a failed attempt to launch his own law

firm, and his wife is expecting their second child. He agrees to talk to Maria only to please his mother.

At one of their first meetings, Ryan is explaining the long, complicated legal process ahead if Maria decides to pursue this case of getting her painting back. Suddenly, Maria, acting motherly, stops Ryan and says, *"How can you see out of those glasses? They're filthy!"* She then pulls the glasses off his face and cleans them with spittle and a napkin. "There!" she says, placing them back on his surprised face. *"That's better. Help you see more clearly."* It's a prophetic moment in the film.

Maria and Ryan go to Vienna to see if they can find the necessary documents to make their case. The Austrian government is determined to keep the painting in Austria and stonewalls them. But with the help of a local journalist, they manage to penetrate the wall of secrecy and obtain the documents that establish Maria's legal claim to the famous painting. Before leaving Austria, Ryan and Maria visit the Holocaust memorial in Vienna, where Ryan recognizes the names of members of his own family. It's a transforming moment for Ryan.



He excuses himself to go to the men's room where he breaks down in tears and rage. He sees, for the first time, that Maria's crusade is not just about a painting belonging to her family. It's also about his

own family and the countless other Jewish families lost in the Holocaust. Randy is now fully committed to the case which will become the focus of his life for the next eight years. Randy now sees Maria's fight as more than just a property battle over a painting - it's a matter of justice for those who came before him and for keeping their memory alive for his own children and for his children's children.

In today's Gospel, a blind man asks to see. Jesus responds not by mixing mud and spittle or touching the man's eyes or looking to heaven in prayer; Jesus says, basically, *Look with the eyes of the faith you already possess.*



The man receives his sight - but Jesus also affirms the vision that the man already possesses: the ability to "see" God's compassion in his midst, to "see" the possibilities for transforming hope and recreating love to heal the brokenness in his life, to "see" his ability to be the means for God's justice and reconciliation. Once Ryan Schoenberg looks at Maria's cause as more than a legal matter and "sees" it as one of justice in which he, as a Jew, is an integral part, the transformation begins.

Jesus opens the eyes of our hearts as well, enabling us to realize the opportunities we have to bring life and light, healing and peace, justice and mercy along our way to the dwelling place of

God. Faith calls us to "see" with the human heart, to perceive in the spirit. The miracle in today's gospel is not so much what Jesus did for blind Bartimaeus, but what He can do for you and me, because there are so many kinds of blindness. We often see only what we want to see, or what our culture programs us to see. Our culture can be the biggest blind spot of all. Someone described our relationship to culture being like fish in the ocean. Fish live in the ocean their whole life: swimming, eating, reproducing without a thought to the ocean all around them. Our relationship is the same with our culture. We don't give much thought to its existence, its presumptions, its biases. We can be as blind to it as fish are to the sea. Unless we question things and step back a little to take a critical look at the events and people and media and politics and economy that shape our world, we can't see the new ways of being to which Jesus calls us.

Christ came to bring a new vision to the world – the reign of God. He heals the blind man to show us that God desires to free us all from suffering and to make the world whole. With the blind man we have to call out to the Lord: *Jesus, son of David, have pity on us!* We have to make our request of the Lord: *Master, we want to see!* Then, with Jesus, we have to make God's desire for the healing and wholeness of the world our own dream and hope – working to make all things whole and, with restored vision, see the world and all people through the eyes of faith, hope and love.

This week ended the month-long Synod on Youth at the Vatican in Rome, entitled "Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment." On October 3rd Pope Francis formally welcomed 267 bishops and priests as voting members of the synod, eight delegates from other

Christian churches and another 72 youth, young adults, members of religious orders and lay men and women.



At the beginning of the Synod Pope Francis challenged the elders in attendance, telling them that *“adults should overcome the temptation to underestimate the abilities of young people and should not judge them negatively.”* Young people, too, he said, must *“overcome the temptation to ignore adults and to consider the elderly 'archaic, outdated and boring,' forgetting that it is foolish always to start from scratch as if life began only with each of them.”* It remains to be seen what the outcome will be.

Reports from participants and observers throughout the deliberations talked about the challenges before the Synod. The women delegates listened to the synod’s discussions, spoke on the floor of the synod hall, participated in small dialogue groups, and helped draft key synod texts. Yet women were not allowed by Canon Law to vote on the final text of the synod document. Only the bishops and other elected male representatives from religious orders could vote. That every paragraph of the final synod document passed with far more than the two-thirds vote necessary is a good sign that the bishops were listening and seeing. However, one section referencing “sexual inclinations” (there wasn’t agreement to use the designation LGBT that is commonly used) and the need to accompany gays

received the most no votes, at 65. One section calling for women to have a greater recognition and say in the church, and lamenting the “absence” of the female perspective — received 30 no votes. There’s obviously still is a need for healing the Church’s blindness and restoring a clearer gospel vision of inclusion and acceptance.

As we hear the story of blind Bartimaeus today, let’s thank God for the gift of sight and resolve to respect and not endanger those gifts that expand our field of vision and open our hearts to the divine. We follow the voice of Jesus, the Master, who alone can cure the blindness we suffer in all its forms. What the crowd said to Bartimaeus, they also say to us: *Take courage, get up! Jesus is calling you!*



John Kasper, OSFS