



Some reflections inspired by online copyrighted commentaries and homilies

**October 24, 2021**

**Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

To appreciate today's gospel in which Jesus heals the beggar Bartimaeus, we should remember last week's gospel in which Jesus has a conversation with the apostles James and John. In both gospels Jesus asks the exact same question, "What do you want me to do for you?" But the answers in the two gospels are very different. James and John ask that they sit at Jesus' right and left when he comes into his glory. Bartimaeus says, "Master I want to see." James and John ask for glory and power. Bartimaeus asks for pity and mercy. Jesus tells James and John that he cannot grant their request, but he immediately responds to Bartimaeus, and the beggar receives his sight.

When we compare these two gospels, they tell us that pity is more important than glory, that to be able to see is more to be desired than power. This is an important message because you and I, like James and John, in our humanity, are attracted to authority and power. We seek the ability to make things happen, to get things done. We should want the power to bring about that which is good. We look at our children and say, "I want to make sure that they grow into mature and successful adults." We look at someone we love who is struggling with addiction and say, "I want this addiction to end."

Today's gospel tells us that before we ask Jesus for the power to do those things, we should first ask to see, with our spiritual eyes. We should see our children as the gifted and unique persons that God has given to our life, because if we can love them as they are today, it is more than likely they will grow into the adults they need to be. We should see the person who is struggling with addiction as someone caught-up, scared and shame, because if we can recognize what embraces a person and stand with them in their brokenness, it is more likely that they will be successful in their recovery and conversion.

Today's gospel tells us that before we ask for the power to do something, we should ask for the ability to see—to see the anger and prejudice that fuel the political divide, to see the weakness and sinfulness that allow violence and drug abuse to continue. It is only when we can see like Jesus and understand the brokenness of a political system, and our community, our brothers and sisters, that we will be able to rebuild them. We all want to have the power to do good things. That is why James and John asked for it. But Bartimaeus reminds us that first we should ask to see, because it is only when we see and understand the world as it really is, that we will be able to help build the world into what God intends it to be.