

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Year B

Jer 31:7-9

Ps 126:1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 6

Heb 5:1-6

Mk 10:46-52

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Two weeks ago in our Gospel, the rich young man asked Jesus a question - a question that most of us would love to know the answer - "How do I achieve everlasting life?" If we knew what to do each day it would make life a lot easier but much less challenging. Our call to faith and discipleship is not getting all the right answers but living a life that frees us up to ask to hard questions.

This Sunday, Jesus is one who asked the question of Bartimaeus, "What do you want me to do for you?" Another question which would certainly answer a lot of concerns that we might have about our call to discipleship and our response to Christ.

As we come to end of another liturgical year, we have been called by St. Mark to a response to Jesus' call to discipleship. The story of the blind man, Bartimaeus, only accentuates the need for us to see Christ with our eyes of faith since we can often be blinded to what God is asking of us in this life due to various outside pressures that interfere with our ability to hear God calling us.

Bartimaeus has an excuse for not responding to Jesus since he cannot see that Christ has actually stopped His journey to summons him. Once he is told by his friends that Christ is calling him, he jumps up to respond to that call. If only we would be as anxious to respond to the call of God in our lives.

Over the years I have know many a young person who gave every indication to me that God was calling them to a life of service. They in turn would find every excuse conceivable for not wanting to respond to that call. Several of these young adults are now in their late 30's & 40's still searching for what it is that might bring them meaning in life when all along it was right in front of them. Like Bartimaeus, they did not see that Christ had stopped to call them to something greater than their own selfish ambitions. In more recent years, as I see our Augustinian Volunteers at work among God's poor, I see the opposite. Several of these young adults have found a way to respond to God by a year of service which will hopefully make them more aware of their long term commitment to serve God through others.

The prophet Jeremiah would be another great example of a person who was called by God to perform a task that he did not want to do yet, he eventually responded to God and found himself a prophet for God's people often bringing them news that they did not want to hear. Jeremiah could have pretended that he too was blind to God's call and just go on with his life but the transforming nature of God's call often has a way of changing our focus in life so that we begin to see things in a different way.

Once Bartimaeus responded to Christ, he literally began to see life differently because God called him out of darkness into the light of Christ, into a life of discipleship.

Our first call out of darkness is at our Baptism when like Jeremiah, Melchizedek and Bartimaeus; we are called by name to serve God with our lives. Our vocation at that

time is still a mystery as was the vocation of those called by name this weekend in our scriptures until they responded to God's call. When we are anointed priest, prophet, and king with the oil of chrism, we become like Jeremiah, the prophet, in that we must proclaim the good news with our lives in a prophetic ministry that often is not well accepted in a secular society. Like Melchizedek, we are called to the royal priesthood of Jesus Christ to serve not to be served. We are called into a ministry of discipleship, which is a learning process that gives us all the tools we need to open our eyes, and ears to not only hear the word of God but to see it clearly and respond to it with our practice of the faith. Finally we are called to be king, but not in the sense of royalty. We are called like Bartimaeus by Christ, the anointed one, to act on his behalf as vibrant members of the Christian community which has been charged with the task of making the Kingdom of God visible to those physically and spiritually blind.

The Eucharist we celebrate is our way of nurturing that call to a life of grace and service. The breaking of the bread is a sign to us that God is breaking open our lives so that we can honestly respond to all that God asks of us even in a world that tries so hard to dissuade us from answering that call.

We already know the answer to the question asked by the rich young man, for we know full well how to achieve everlasting life. It is Christ who asks the harder question this week, "what do you want me to do for you?" If you can answer that question honestly, then like Bartimaeus, you will see God in all that he calls you to do and hopefully others will see Christ through you.