

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time B/2009

We all have had the experience, one day or another, of discovering something totally new, which we had never thought of before, as we talk with a friend or discuss with someone about a given subject. In that case, we often say: “I’ve never seen things that way”; or “I’ve never thought about it that way”.

When we come to such a claim, it means that such a friend has opened our eyes; he has led us to a deep understanding of things; he has helped us to discover the hidden dimensions of reality we did not perceive before.

In fact, meeting good people can change our lives; it can bring new dimensions to our perception of the world and things. Such people can open our eyes to realities to which we did not pay attention. They can broaden our way of looking at things and persons. They can contribute to our happiness and joy.

That is exactly what today’s readings tell us, namely that where God’s grace and hands are at work, things change; human blindness gives way to light and joy of being guided by the presence of the Lord.

This is not something by chance or random; it is a permanent fact in salvation history. In fact, where God intervenes, human history changes; it goes from gloom to brightness, from suffering to happiness. As the first reading tells us, while the people of Israel were in exile, God promised them, through the mouth of Jeremiah, a period of liberation and the end of their misery. Therefore, they should shout with joy and exult because God is about to bring them back home. He will gather them from the end of the world, with the blind and the lame in their midst. He will bring them to brooks of water and leveled roads where they cannot stumble anymore.

As we already know, a prophecy has always a short and a long term. In fact, when we read the life of Jesus with this text in mind, we realize that it was in the life of Jesus that the prophecy of Jeremiah was completely fulfilled. It was Jesus who, through his blood on the cross, has gathered all the dispersed children of Israel. It is he who is the Messiah sent by the Father to set free all those who are under the burden of sin.

That is why the Letter to the Hebrews presents Jesus as our high priest. In the Old Testament, the priests were the representative of God before the people and offered gifts and sacrifice for the sins of the people. They did not attribute to themselves that honor, but rather were called by God, just as Aaron was. In the same way, it was not Christ who glorified himself in becoming high priest, but rather the Father who begot him and made him priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. While the Jewish priests were still sinners and surrounded by weakness, Jesus offered once and for all his own blood on the cross in order to bring salvation to mankind.

When the blind Bartimaeus cries out to him on the road, begging for healing, he recognized in him the Messiah who can have compassion on his infirmity. He saw in him the fulfillment of the prophecy of Jeremiah and the one who could help him in his desperate situation of blindness.

In fact, Jesus encouraged him to come forward, to brave the opinion of those who surrounded him, and to receive the healing he had wanted for so long.

What strikes in this Gospel, is the persistent attitude of Bartimaeus. While the crowd tries to silence him, he keeps calling on Jesus to have mercy on him. In fact, our determination to never stop until we obtain what we want in our prayer is the first condition that makes the miracle possible. That determination should be guided by our trusting faith in the Lord that he can do it for us. In the end, it was what the blind man wanted in his faith that Jesus gave him. But the healing he obtained came after he was persistent in crying out to Jesus. That is a lesson to each one of us on how we have to be persistent in our prayer.

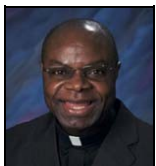
Bartimaeus teaches us also the courage of our conviction. When the crowd tried to silence him, he did not stop crying out to Jesus. Because he had enough conviction, he attracted Jesus' attention and obtained the healing. Today, we need people of conviction who are able to accept to be courageous in the middle of contradictions and conflicts of the world, even if they are rebuked by society.

Another point is the reaction of Bartimaeus to Jesus' call. Once he heard the voice of Jesus calling him, he immediately reacted. He threw away his cloak and jumped to him. Unlike Bartimaeus, some of us when we hear the call of Jesus often say, "wait until I have done this" or "Wait until I have finished that". What we forget is that some chances are unique. They come just once. We never know whether the chance we miss today will come our way again. Especially when it is about our eternal salvation or our conversion, we should never delay things.

The last point I want to highlight is about the knowledge Bartimaeus had about what he wanted to obtain from Jesus. He wanted to see and not something else. The fact is that some people do not know what they should pray for; they do not know what they want before God. In fact, when we are afraid of self-examination of our lives, it can be difficult to discover what we need before the Lord or what we have to change in order to abide closely in Jesus.

As this Sunday is dedicated in our country to prayer for our priests, we ask the Lord to enlighten our priests so that they seek first the will of God in their lives and in their mission. We pray in particular for the priests of our Parish so that they listen to the voice of wisdom of the Spirit of Jesus and work for peace and the good of our Parish Community. We pray also that the Lord may touch the hearts of many young men so that they consecrate their lives to the service of their brothers and sisters inside the Church and for the glory of God. May God bless you all!

Jeremiah 31, 7-9; Hebrews 5, 1-6; Mark 10, 46-52



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Contact: www.mbala.org

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