

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time B/2015

The readings of this Sunday talk about the importance of the divine healing. They show that God listens to the prayers of those who call out to him in their distress. They invite us to seize any opportunity that comes our way and ask for healing from God.

The first reading describes the prophecy of Jeremiah about the end of Israel's exile. It announces the joyful atmosphere that will reign throughout the whole country as the people will enjoy freedom and deliverance. It highlights in particular God's promise of gathering the remnant of the children of Israel from all over the world where they had been scattered. Finally, the text announces the transformation of the fate of all those who were in exile.

What is behind this text is the idea that God is the deliverer and the rescuer of his people. There is also the idea that where God is involved, the fate of his people changes for the best. The last idea is the truth that whatever might be the suffering of God's people, he will never abandon them forever or condemn them to their suffering.

This text allows us to understand today's Gospel as Jesus heals the blind Bartimaeus. First of all, the Gospel starts by mentioning the presence of Jesus who was leaving the town of Jericho and the blind man named Bartimaeus who was begging by the roadside.

It also mentions the petition of Bartimaeus asking Jesus to heal him, as he heard that he was passing by. Then, it reports that though many tried to silence him, he kept on calling to the point that Jesus ended up by stopping and listening to his request.

Finally, the Gospel reports his healing and the declaration of Jesus that his faith has saved him and then of his following Jesus.

What do we learn from this Gospel? Today I want to talk about the importance of healing of sight. What do I mean by that? Before entering into explanation, let me start by telling you a story I saw on YouTube. In fact, there was a man who was blind and was begging along the road. He had a tablet on which it was written: "I am blind and cannot see; please help me". In response to his request, people were putting some coins in the box he had with him.

A young lady stopped by and saw what was written. She took the tablet from the hands of the man, erased the written words and wrote: "This is a beautiful day, but I cannot see it, because I am blind". When the passing people saw it, they were so touched that they gave more money than he had received before it was done.

The blind man was wondering what really the young lady did write that the people suddenly became so generous. When evening came, the young lady stopped by again. The blind man, sensing her movement and touching her feet, realized that it was the same lady of the morning. Then, he asked her what she did. The lady told him that she changed the words written on the tablet. At that time, the blind man understood that, "if you change your words, you can change your world".

Why am I telling you this story? I am telling this story, because I want you to go deep in the understanding of today's Gospel. In fact, Bartimaeus can be considered as a professional beggar. He certainly knew by experience the words to use in order to get

help from people. In spite of all that, the help he got from them was too small to alleviate his suffering. He would certainly prefer to be healed of his blindness than to be eternally a beggar. This time, as he heard about Jesus passing by, he changed his words. What he wanted was just that the son of David may have pity on him. Even when many rebuked him, he kept calling on Jesus. In the end, he got what he wanted, namely the healing of his blindness and his world was changed forever and for the best.

Like him we can also get the healing of our sight. But, we have to know which one we really need, because there are three types of blindness. First, there is physical blindness. It is characterized by the absence of vision. Perhaps, that is not what we need now because our vision is still good.

However, we have always to remember that even if we see, we still need to give to our hearts eyes so that we may see what external vision cannot see. As the French writer Antoine de Saint-Exupery said, "It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye".

Second, there is moral blindness. It is more dangerous than the first. The measure of it is our conscience, because it is our conscience that helps us distinguish right from wrong. Though we are born with a conscience, it can grow and develop, as well as it can die. What keeps the conscience vivid is an enlightened human experience and the Gospel as well. If the conscience is dead, then, there is a complete moral blindness. This is the case of criminals who do not see anything wrong with killing, as well as it can be for people who have no truth, no guilt, no shame, no regret, no resentment, etc. As physical blindness can endanger our body, so can moral blindness endanger our soul. That is why I believe that we have to strive not only for seeing the trees, but also for distinguishing the right from the wrong.

Third, there is the blindness of unbelief. In fact, as physical sight comes through our eyes and moral sight through our conscience, spiritual sight comes through faith. If faith is missing in a person, then, he is in a complete spiritual blindness. If faith is there, it gives us another perspective on the world, on people and events happening to us and around us. We really need faith so that we come to understand what is going on in the world and where we stand in our relationship to it and people.

Today, we have to ask the Lord to heal us by increasing our faith so that we may see what the eyes of our body cannot see and hear what the ears of our body cannot hear. May he give eyes to our hearts so that we come to see his mysteries! May he give us also the grace of his Holy Spirit so that he inspires us with the right words which can help us change the world! God bless you all!

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



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