

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

October 28, 2012

Last week, we heard Jesus ask two of his closest disciples, “What do you want me to do for you?” They answered, “See to it that we sit, one at your right and the other at your left, when you come into your glory.” Their answer was shallow and showed how out of touch they were with Jesus. In today’s gospel, Jesus asks the same question of the blind beggar, Bartimaeus: “What do you want me to do for you?” “Rabboni,” the blind man said, “I want to see.” Beggars can’t be choosers. They have to ask for what they really need.

The story abounds in meaning. The disciples are more blind than the beggar. They prayed out of greed; he prayed out of need. And what about you? How do you pray? If Jesus asked you today, “What do you want me to do for you?” how would you answer? What do you need?

Here today’s readings are rich. Jeremiah tells how God will restore all Israel. *God* will do this. And God will do it with compassion: “Among those gathered will be the blind and the lame, the woman with child and she who is in travail... With weeping they shall come, and with consolations I will lead them back... for I am father to Israel, and Ephraim is my first-born.”

The Letter to the Hebrews makes the same point in a different context. Whether it is the Jewish high priest or the new high priest Christ, their ministry ultimately goes back to God’s own choosing. To human compassion must be added divine appointment. Whoever is called to serve, it is God who calls. God takes the initiative.

The blind beggar might seem an exception. After all, isn’t it he who calls out “Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me!” Only on the surface of things. God took the initiative, the initiative in loving him. God loved him from the moment he was born. God made it possible for him to believe, made it possible of him to cry out to Jesus; for “your faith has made you well,” and faith is a gift. God takes the initiative. God is first in loving. God first comes to us.

“Take heart,” the Gospel proclaims today, “he is calling you.” Jesus is calling you – not only those who will be anointed in the name and with the power of Christ in the Sacrament of the Sick. You. Each of you.

All who are united in the bond of a common baptism and a common faith are joined together in the body of Christ. What happens to one member affects all. The sacrament of anointing effectively expresses the share that each one has in the sufferings of others. This message of hope and comfort is also needed by those who care for the sick and the elderly, especially those who are closely bound in love for them.

What is it that you want Jesus to do for you? What is it that you expect from God? What is it that you want for our church? And when Jesus asks you what you want of him, say with the blind beggar: “Master, let me see.” Let my eyes open on the poor and the powerless, on the ailing and the aged. Let me see where I can love without limit, without measure or calculation. I must be like *you* in loving. Blind beggars all, let us beg the Master today, now, simply to let us see.

Paul A. Magnano

Pastor