

30th Sunday (B)

- May I make a confession?
- I have walked past beggars in the street here in Melbourne & overseas & I often haven't given anything – I've walked by, careful that my eyes don't meet theirs, & I feel a sense of shame, most particularly because if that person or someone else should know me, they could call out – there goes a Christian, or a Catholic, & a priest at that & he gives nothing out of compassion for the poor.
- I have a wealth of good reasons why I don't give anything (often because I'm not carrying change), & I will at times give, but my fear is being caught-out & shamed, particularly because of what & whom I represent.
- I can imagine myself wanting to keep Bartimaeus quiet as I walk by, not to make me feel embarrassed for not attending to him, not knowing what to do for him, but Jesus does know & that's the point of the Gospel.
- The blind man somehow sensed all this & so he cries out to Jesus.
- I think Mark wants us to see him as a symbol for us, but to also model how & why we are to respond & attend to all the Bartimaeuses in our time.
- A fortnight ago it was a rich man who felt the call but couldn't let go his possessions to follow his dream; he went away from Jesus sad.
- Last week it was people who were jealous of their position & power.
- Jesus tells them to get in touch with the child in them – the little child who cries out for life.
- Today we see a man with nearly nothing - all he has is an old cloak.
- He slept in it & during the day he placed it in front of him hoping for a few coins from a compassionate passer-by.
- He senses something in Jesus that is beautiful & free.
- He calls out & he won't let anyone talk him out of it.
- Jesus stops - of course he stops - this is God who hears the cry of the poor.
- He wants to respond to the blind man's call.
- But Jesus does not call the man himself, he does it through others.
- That is the way Jesus chooses to operate.
- Jesus hears our call & he answers it through those who listen to him & learn to love as he loves.
- He needs us to love for him & he empowers us to extend that love to those who need to experience it.
- Then the man throws off his cloak.
- It is all he has but it is enough to hold him back.
- In fact one gets the impression that it is the cloak that is making him unable to see.

- There is nothing much holding this man back, but he has to throw it off or he will never be able to run to Jesus; he has to cast off the cloak or he will never be free to see.
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- At this stage I'm led to ask the question of myself - What am I hiding behind? What am I holding on to, however insignificant, that keeps my hands clasped & so unable to receive God's gift.
- What is stopping me going to Jesus with open hands?
- Jesus, with typical respect, does not presume to know what the man wants, but asks him: 'What do you want me to do for you?'
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- Let that be Jesus' question to each of us today.
- Jesus doesn't make decisions for us; he doesn't control us or lock us into a cage, he doesn't constrain us; he wants us to be free, totally free.
- So he asks us to ask ourselves what it is that we really want.
- Why are we unsatisfied, off the road & blind?
- What do I want Jesus to do for me?
- The blind beggar asks to see again.
- And it is his 'faith' that makes it possible for him to be healed & so to see.
- The sight referred to in this Gospel isn't the sight of the eye, or even the sight of the mind, it is the seeing of the heart that knows it is made for loving & that recognises in Jesus the God who is the answer to its longing.
- It is the sight of one who knows its own powerlessness & vulnerability, & who cries out for meaning & direction, to take hold of my life, trusting in the compassion of God revealed in Jesus.
- It is this faith, & nothing else, that makes it possible for Bartimaeus to 'follow Jesus on the way' that leads to the cross, but ultimately to new life through the resurrection.
- Bartimaeus takes 3 steps that will change his life – he throws off his cloak that is an obstacle to his meeting Jesus – he then takes some uncertain steps in the darkness of his lack of sight - & finally moves forward with determination & becomes a disciple following Jesus.
- Going back to my original confession, perhaps we as Church are being caught out by the loud calls of Bartimaeus – we have been shamed & are continually hearing the cries of those who want to be healed.
- The Plenary will continue the voices of the Bartimaeuses of our time – the voices that plead to be heard, that yearn for our modeling ourselves on the mind & heart of Jesus.