**The Parish of Saints Anthony & Aloysius**

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**Homily at Mass 30th Sunday of Ordinary Time, Year B – 28 October 2018**

The Invictus Games don’t seem to have the drawing power of the Olympics, but who of us hasn’t been impressed, even touched, by the stories of many of the competitors – all of them ex-military, survivors of modern warfare, psychological hurt and physical injury. At last weekend’s Opening Ceremony Prince Harry recalled that we are now 100 years since the end of World War I: What if the Invictus Games had been there for all of those who returned after years of terrible war back then? Organisations like Australia’s RSL did good work in providing a social hub for all those ex-soldiers, sailors, airmen, nurses and others: But all of us know how the men of that era 100 years ago, and those who served in World War II, kept all sorts of memories bottled up. Physical injury is one thing – it’s something that all of us can see and sympathise with. But only now are we beginning to understand the burden of depression that weighs so many people down: stress, sleepless nights, dreams and nightmares, fear to open up and talk and share the pain, the grief, the sadness. All the competitors at the Invictus Games acknowledge Prince Harry’s initiative – an initiative which has given each of them new goals, new purpose, new confidence, a new start, a new life, along with the loving support of wives and husbands, mates and families.

Today, one of the world’s injured takes a leap in faith towards Jesus. How long had the blind man Bartimaeus sat at the roadside outside the gates of Jericho, begging, relying on the small change and the pity of passers by? Jericho is still a lush oasis in the midst of a desert. In New Testament times it was a holiday resort, mainly for the wealthy. The “large crowd” St Mark speaks of was probably made up of holiday makers, tourists, people with time on their hands and open to distraction, amusement, something to fill in the day. As he passed through Jericho, Jesus probably offered the notoriety of a local celebrity. It’s not until he makes his way past the city gates that he encounters someone who can see him, recognise him for who he really is: Jesus of Nazareth – son of David.

This is one of those classic Gospel ironies: only a blind man can see – a poor man can grasp riches, a captive discovers freedom – a man rejected by society finds the society, the friendship of Jesus, son of David, Son of God. A man injured, damaged, hurt by life finds a champion who restores his hope, and gives him a share in his victory – the victory of the Cross and Resurrection.

The story of Bartimaeus offers us a lot of encouragement today. One bit of encouragement is the encouragement all of us need to retain a certain resilience in our relationship with God. In the first instance in today’s Gospel story the bystanders tell blind Bartimaeus to pipe down, to shut up, to stop calling out to Jesus. But St Mark tells us “he only shouted all the louder”. When it comes to our prayer life, “shout all the louder”: never give in to discouragement, never grow tired or fed up. When it comes to keeping up a faithful christian life, weekly Sunday Mass, moral goodness and generosity, “shout all the louder”. Our time together each week renews our confidence – we follow Jesus not just as individuals but as a community of believers, disciples, not blind men but men and women with vision and insight; in the darkness we behold the world’s true light, the eyes of Christ gives us fresh perception of all that is good, and beautiful. With the true eyes of Christ we see that life is a gift; that as the sun rises each day God calls us to be his sons and daughters, to grow in his love, to serve him in freedom, to be missionaries and apostles of love and joy, ambassadors of peace, agents of hope. Christ gives us eyes to see the beauty of human love, the dignity of marriage, the meaning of human work. With the eyes of Christ we see the beauty and wonder of the world around us. We also see the reality of the Church, the Family of God, the Body of Christ – Christ’s presence in our world, and the community life we share, which finds its source and its strength at the Altar and the gift of Christ in the Eucharist.