

**Homily for the Thirtieth Sunday of Ordinary Time
October 28, 2018**

Who are *you* in today's Gospel? Are you Bartimaeus, the blind beggar who calls out to Jesus in humble faith and is given the gift of sight? Or are you the crowd, who doesn't really see Jesus for who He is and who tries to silence Bartimaeus and push him to the margins? I have to admit that at times I'm probably a little of both, and I suspect that's true with you, too.

We're all here today because like Bartimaeus, we recognize who Jesus is. We're here to worship Him, to listen to His Word, to receive Him in the Eucharist. In a few minutes we'll profess our faith; hopefully with the same conviction that Bartimaeus had when he called out in faith to Jesus. Here – in this house of God – it's easy for us to proclaim our faith. We're in the company of other faithful Christians. But what happens after we walk through the doors after Mass and find ourselves in the midst of...the crowd?

In many cases the crowd of today's secular society is no less eager to silence *us* than the crowd that tried to silence *Bartimaeus*. Whether we're talking about abortion, same-sex unions, or any number of other issues, today's crowd often doesn't want to hear what we have to say. But like Bartimaeus, we need to have the courage to stand apart from the crowd and say it anyway.

There's a quote that's been attributed to St. Augustine, G.K. Chesterton, Mother Teresa and others that goes something like this: "Right is right even if *nobody* is doing it, and wrong is wrong even if *everybody* is doing it." But it can be easier and a whole lot more comfortable to just blend in with the crowd, can't it? Who wants to take the risk of being the only person to call a wrong a wrong? I know as well as you do how hard it can be to live your faith when you're the only person at work who doesn't participate in...let's just call it "shop talk." I can imagine the conflict health care providers feel when they are pressured to discuss treatment options or medicines that are contrary to their faith. And I can imagine how reluctant a police officer, social worker, EMT, or other civil servant might be to mention Christ's love to a person who is troubled and contemplating suicide. And young adults. The social pressures on *them* to be part of the crowd

are *enormous*. Yet we all must be willing to stand out from the crowd. That doesn't mean we have to shout out at the top of our lungs like Bartimaeus. Proclaiming our faith by the simple act of consistently living our lives as faithful Catholics can speak loud and clear, especially when authentic Christian witness is oftentimes in stark contrast to the "crowd" of society.

Then there's Satan, who is always there muddying the waters, trying to convince us that we are wrong in *our* beliefs and that the crowd is *right*. Over-simplified slogans like "my body, my choice" can begin to sound reasonable. Sometimes we become confused and find ourselves falling in with the crowd, contradicting our faith without even realizing it.

Then there are the times when we willfully disregard what our faith teaches us and eagerly join right in with the crowd. We say things like, "I'm Catholic, but I don't agree with the Church on" abortion, contraception, or whatever. The crowd is very good at *reinforcing* these attitudes, convincing us that the Church needs to get with the times. And, let's face it, pride can get in the way too. It puts a lot less pressure on us to believe that the *Church* is wrong than to try to fully understand *what* the Church teaches and *why*, and consider that we might be the ones who are wrong.

Whether we contradict our faith out of ignorance, error, or obstinance, these are all times when we are blind. Not *physically* blind like Bartimaeus, but *spiritually* blind.

It might sound like I'm laying a bunch of gloom and doom on you for my first homily, but it's *good* that we recognize our spiritual blindness so that we can confront it head-on. Bartimaeus called out, "Jesus, son of David, have pity on me." Jesus was merciful to him, and he's merciful to us. He *wants* to cure us of our spiritual blindness. He *wants us* to grow in holiness. He *wants us* to become more like Him. He *wants us* to spend eternity with Him in heaven. He calls us to Him just like he called Bartimaeus, and he *wants us* to follow. He *wants* all of these things, but he will not *force* us. He let the crowd in the Gospel keep right on being the crowd. He even gave Bartimaeus an "out" when He said, "Go your way." But because Bartimaeus received not just

the gift of *physical* sight but also *spiritual* sight, he recognized that Jesus *was* the way, and he followed Him without hesitation.

Understanding that in one way or another we all suffer from spiritual blindness, let's follow the example of Bartimaeus and ask for the Lord's mercy when we find ourselves part of the crowd. And when Jesus calls us to Him and asks, "What do you want me to do for you?" may our answer be like Bartimaeus: "Master, I want to see."