

Readings for October 24, 2021 – 30th Sunday in Ordinary Time

With Clearer Vision

When we recognize that the Lord is constantly doing “great things for us” we know we can approach Jesus with confidence, and ask him for what we want. Jesus wants to help us discover our desires. He wants us to be healed.

Opening Prayer: Lord, you remind us that you gather us from the ends of the world and we are here, with our various viewpoints, thoughts and devotions to you. Help us to blend and grow in our diversity, so that we may see you with clearer eyes and always grow closer to you. Amen.

Opening meditation: Jesus opened the eyes of the blind man, who had great trust in Jesus’ divine power. Take a few minutes to think back on your day, or the past couple of days. Ask yourself, “Where did I see Jesus?” What were the circumstances or people who helped me to see this?

Where did I seem blind to what was around me?

What might I remove from my eyes (or from my life) in order to see God more clearly?

Reading I **Jer 31:7-9**

Thus says the LORD: Shout with joy for Jacob,
exult at the head of the nations; proclaim your praise and say:
The LORD has delivered his people, the remnant of Israel.
Behold, I will bring them back from the land of the north;
I will gather them from the ends of the world, with the blind and the lame in their midst,
the mothers and those with child; they shall return as an immense throng.
They departed in tears, but I will console them and guide them;
I will lead them to brooks of water, on a level road, so that none shall stumble.
For I am a father to Israel, Ephraim is my first-born.

Responsorial Psalm **Ps 126:1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 6**

R. (3) The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy.

When the LORD brought back the captives of Zion, we were like men dreaming.
Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with rejoicing.

R. The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy.

Then they said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them."
The LORD has done great things for us; we are glad indeed.

R. The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy.

Restore our fortunes, O LORD, like the torrents in the southern desert.
Those that sow in tears shall reap rejoicing.

R. The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy.

Although they go forth weeping, carrying the seed to be sown,
They shall come back rejoicing, carrying their sheaves.

R. The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy.

Reading II **Heb 5:1-6**

Brothers and sisters: Every high priest is taken from among men and made their representative before God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He is able to deal patiently with the ignorant and erring, for he himself is beset by weakness and so, for this reason, must make sin offerings for himself as well as for the people. No one takes this honor upon himself but only when called by God, just as Aaron was. In the same way, it was not Christ who glorified himself in becoming high priest, but rather the one who said to him: *You are my son: this day I have begotten you;* just as he says in another place: *You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.*

Gospel **Mk 10:46-52**

As Jesus was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a sizable crowd, Bartimaeus, a blind man, the son of Timaeus, sat by the roadside begging. On hearing that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, son of David, have pity on me." And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he kept calling out all the more, "Son of David, have pity on me." Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." So they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take courage; get up, Jesus is calling you." He threw aside his cloak, sprang up, and came to Jesus. Jesus said to him in reply, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man replied to him, "Master, I want to see." Jesus told him, "Go your way; your faith has saved you." Immediately he received his sight and followed him on the way.

Related Reflections

Seeing in a Deeper Way

Seeing implies more than having good eyesight. Our eyes can be wide open and we can be seeing very little.

I've always been intrigued by how scripture describes Paul immediately after his conversion. We always assume that it tells us that Paul was struck blind by his vision, but, I think, the text implies more. It tells us that Paul got up off the ground with his eyes wide open, seeing nothing. That doesn't necessarily equate with physical blindness. He may well have been seeing physically, but he wasn't seeing the meaning of what he was getting himself into. Someone had to come and open his eyes, not just so that he could see again physically but especially that he could see more deeply into the mystery of Christ.

Truly seeing implies more than having eyes that are physically healthy and open. We all see the outer surface of things, but what's beneath isn't as automatically seen.

In the Gospels, we see Jesus perform a number of healings. Almost always, there's more at issue than mere physical healing. Jesus is healing people in a deeper way, that is, he is healing the lame so that they can walk in freedom and in service of God. He is healing the deaf so that they can hear the Good News. He is healing the mute so that they can open their mouths in praise. And he is healing those who are hemorrhaging interiorly so that they can bring new life to birth.

We see this most clearly at those times when Jesus heals people who are blind. He's giving them more than just physical sight; he's opening their eyes so that they can see more deeply. But that's only an image. How might it be unpackaged? How can the grace and teachings of Jesus help us to see in a deeper way? Here are some suggestions:

- By shifting our eyes from seeing through familiarity to seeing through wonder.

G. K. Chesterton once affirmed that familiarity is the greatest of all illusions and that the secret to life is to learn to look at things familiar until they look unfamiliar again.

- By shifting our eyes from seeing through paranoia and self-protection to seeing through metanoia and nurture.

It is not incidental that the first word out of Jesus' mouth in the Synoptic Gospels is the word "metanoia", a word that opposes itself to "paranoia". We open our eyes to depth with we shift from a posture of self-protection to a posture of nurture.

- By shifting our eyes from seeing through jealousy to seeing through admiration.

Our perception becomes distorted whenever we move from the happy state of admiration to the unhappy state of envy. Our eyesight is clear when we delight in admiration.

- By shifting our eyes from seeing through bitterness to seeing through eyes purified and softened by grief. The root of bitterness is wound and the way out of bitterness is grieving. Tears clear our eyesight because they soften a heart hardened by wound.

- By shifting our eyes from seeing through relevance to seeing through contemplation.

Our longing for relevance makes us look out at the world with restless, dissatisfied eyes. We practice mindfulness and see the richness of the present moment only when our disquiet is stilled by solitude.

- By shifting our eyes from seeing through anger to seeing through forgiveness.

Nothing taints our eyesight as much as anger. It's the most debilitating of all cataracts. And nothing cleanses our vision as much as forgiveness. Nobody holding a grudge sees straight.

- By shifting our eyes from seeing through longing and hunger to seeing through gratitude.

Longing and hunger distort our vision. Gratitude restores it. It enables insight. The most grateful person you know has the best eyesight of all the people you know.

(Fr. Ron Rolheiser)

What do you want?

When Jesus heals him and Bartimaeus can see, Jesus says that Bartimaeus's faith has saved him. But why? What does Bartimaeus's receiving his sight have to do with his being saved?

Here we need to notice what Bartimaeus actually says to Jesus in answer to Jesus' question to him. Bartimaeus does not say to Jesus, "I want my sight." He says, "I want to see." To want sight is to want a capacity which can be used for all kinds of purposes—raising sheep, making money. But to want to see is to want the connection with reality that the exercise of sight makes possible. Wanting to see is wanting to know the true nature of reality, hidden in one way from a person when he is blind.

Once we see what Bartimaeus asks for, the funny parts of the story make more sense. When Jesus calls Bartimaeus to himself, he gives Bartimaeus a small period of time to consider what he *really* wants, before Jesus asks him. And then the presence of the Lord and that question serve as a call to Bartimaeus to commit himself to just one heart's-desire. And Bartimaeus finds it: I want to *see*. Seeing isn't limited to seeing the blue of the sky or the road to home. It is also a matter of seeing the truth about things, or even of seeing The Truth himself. And so Jesus gives Bartimaeus all that he asks for. Bartimaeus sees not only the world around him, but also his Lord.

-Eleonore Stump, St. Louis University

Living the relationship in suffering:

The process of allowing Christ to save us from suffering has three moments. First, we must name our sufferings. They may be minor, our daily "thorns in the flesh," or major, our Gethsemanes and Calvaries. But naming the suffering is for many the hardest part of the process. We resist it, feeling that weakness demeans us. We prefer to imagine ourselves as independent and self-reliant, with no need of help from God. But the acknowledgement of our need is an essential condition for the Lord's action. St. Paul was painfully aware of his infirmity, his "thorn in the flesh" and his need for help. So also were the blind, the deaf, the diseased and the infirm in the Gospel. Acknowledging need is never demeaning for the disciple of Christ; rather, it is a privileged occasion for experiencing his love.

Second, we approach Christ in confidence – using images from the Gospel that are powerful for us. We go in confidence because Jesus invites us to come to him, especially if we are weary and burdened... The people Jesus cured approached him in total trust; lack of faith inhibited Jesus' ability to heal. Third, we wait patiently and confidently – days, months, even years. Paul recalls begging the Lord three different times to remove his "thorn." But while we are waiting, we are being transformed gradually, even below the level of conscious awareness. We wait confidently: "my grace is sufficient."

- Richard Hauser, S.J. (*Finding God in Troubled Times*, Loyola Press, 2002)

Focus on Justice

Justice Will Abide

We inhabitants of the earth are a people in exile. We are not at home on the very land we occupy, and so we rape and plunder it. We are not at home with each other, and so we violate each other's dignity and kill. When one of us cries out prophetically to the Lord, as the blind beggar Bartimaeus did, the others "scold him to make him keep quiet."

Fortunately, though, we have a Lord who “will bring them back from the land of the north, who will gather them from the ends of the world,” so that they can “return as an immense throng.” (First Reading) This is the Lord who has “done great things for us,” especially for the blind and the lame such as Bartimaeus.

“What do you want me to do for you?” Jesus asks the blind beggar. What do the people of the world want us Christians to do for them? Can we bring them home and lead them out of exile? Can we follow in the footsteps of Christ and “do away with death?” Can we provide the faith that will heal?

We do not know the time for the consummation of the earth and of humanity. Nor do we know how all things will be transformed. As deformed by sin, the shape of this world will pass away. But we are taught that God is preparing a new dwelling place and a new earth where justice will abide, and whose blessedness will answer and surpass all the longings for peace which spring up in the human heart.

Vatican II, Constitution on the Church in the Modern World,
1965: 39

Gerald Darring, published on <https://liturgy.slu.edu/>

Stay Woke

If you frequent social media, you may well have seen posts or tweets about current events that are tagged #staywoke. Woke is a slang term that is easing into the mainstream from some varieties of a dialect called African American Vernacular English (sometimes called AAVE). In AAVE, *awake* is often rendered as *woke*, as in, “I was sleeping, but now I’m woke.”

Woke is increasingly used as a byword for social awareness. Read more about this at

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/woke-meaning-origin>

St. Ignatius was ahead of his time in this area. A fundamental perspective of Ignatius is that in our spiritual life, we ought to pray for greater awareness and attentiveness. Stay awake, pay attention!

Here are a few more thoughts about “staying awake” from Jesuit priest Anthony DeMello:

Wake up and Become Aware

“Be aware of what you’re saying, be aware of what you’re doing, be aware of what you’re thinking, be aware of how you’re acting. Be aware of where you’re coming from, what you’re motives are. The unaware life is not worth living. The unaware life is a mechanical life. It’s not human, it’s programmed, conditioned.” – Anthony de Mello

Throughout his writings, Fr. de Mello describes multiple ways to wake up, some include:

- Admit to yourself that change is necessary
- Be open to discover something new

- Drop the barriers you have erected through your concepts and conditioning
- Do not see people as you are yourself, but as who *they* are
- Identify your negative feelings, understand that they stem from you and are not put upon you by anyone else
- Learn that things come and go

Questions:

We feel hopeful when we consider that “justice will abide” in God’s eternal Kingdom (from the Vatican II documents, above). But what can I do to help promote justice in God’s Kingdom here on earth?

Think of the idea of “abiding.” How does abiding with God (and God abiding in us) relate to the promotion of a more just and peaceful world? Can we do any of this work apart from God?

How can seeing things more clearly (opening our eyes to the truth) help us to better understand the racial protests and social awareness of today?

Prayer:

Grant me, O Lord, to see everything now with new eyes,
 to discern and test the spirits that help me read the signs of the times,
 to relish the things that are yours, and to communicate them to others.
 Give me the clarity of understanding that you gave Ignatius. -- *Personal prayer of Pedro Arrupe, S.J.*

Also:

O Lord my God, teach my heart this day where and how to see you; where and how to find you... Let me find you by loving you, let me love you when I find you. – *St. Anselm*