

[Readings: Jeremiah 31:7-9; Psalm 126; Hebrews 5:1-6; Mark 10:46-52]

Do you remember learning the Five Senses when you were in grade school? Hearing, seeing, smelling tasting and feeling. To lose any of our senses would be terrible. I think the worst sense to lose for me, would be the sense of sight. I am a very visual person. I like to look at things that delight the eyes. Certainly, looking at the sun shining through the autumn leaves in Michigan can leave us breathless at times.

Mark in today's Gospel, gives us the second story of a blind man healed of his blindness. The first miracle happens as Jesus leaves Jerusalem and begins his public ministry. Today's miracle happens as Jesus ends his three years of preaching, teaching and healing and He heads back home for what awaits Him.

Mark deliberately places these two miracles at the beginning and at the end of the public life of Jesus for a reason. He wants us to "see" and understand his Gospel message. "What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asks. "Master, I want to see." This is the simplest yet most profound request you or I or Bartimaeus can ask. "I want to see." I want to see not only with the eyes of my head, but with the eyes of my mind, with the eyes of my heart, with the eyes of my soul. I want to understand. I want to believe.

Isn't this what you and I hope to achieve in our lifetimes? The wisdom, the knowledge, the understanding of life and how to handle its problems and its blessings? To find my own identity, to know who I am and what God expects of me. This request is easy to make, and much more difficult to accept when Jesus gives us the profound answer: "Go on your way; your faith has saved you." It can also be translated, "Your faith has healed you." Which is easier to receive, healing or salvation?

This weekend is World Youth Day. The day that the universal Church, the Church throughout the world, celebrates the younger members of our faith community. Did you know that when the late, great Pope John Paul II established the first World Youth Day, his target audience was not children aged 13 to 18, but young adults aged 18 to 35? Anyone younger than 18 is considered a child. A child with the potential of becoming a young adult.

We often say that the young have their whole lives ahead of them. So does Bartimaeus. We don't know how young or how old he is, but he still speaks for all of us, especially our young people.

He asks for something much deeper than mere physical eyesight. We can imagine him saying, "Lord Jesus, give me sight. Let me see again. Let me see the way in front of me.

Heal me of whatever it is that is keeping me from seeing." This is what Jesus "sees" in the man's heart, in his very soul. This is what Jesus "sees" when He looks you and me right in the eye when He asks, "What do you want me to do for YOU?" What DO you want Jesus to do for you today? Take a silent moment to think about that... Now imagine one of the crowd saying to you today, "Take courage; get up, Jesus is calling you." What cloaks of encumbrance do we need to shed? What is keeping us from "springing up" to come to Jesus today?

Jeremiah, our prophet from today's First Reading, knew first-hand how it was to follow the Lord, and what it would cost him. He would be mocked, threatened and assaulted by those who wished to silence him and the truth he preached. The author of the Letter to the Hebrews reminds us of what priests must go through each day "beset" with our own weakness, struggles and sin.

And when St. Mark tells us that immediately Bartimaeus receives his sight and follows Jesus "on the way," he reminds us that it is not going to be like dancing along the Yellow Brick Road. Jesus is "on the way" to Jerusalem. This means that Jesus is on his way to His suffering and imprisonment, His torture and His execution, His death and His Glorious Resurrection.

I would like to close with a special message for the young people here today. If you are 35 years old or younger, this is for you. Young people: Bartimaeus begins his journey on the side of the road and in the darkness. Instead of telling Jesus that he wants a place of honor, as John and James did last week; after he is healed and saved, Bartimaeus silently follows Jesus "on the way." On the way of Jesus, not another way.

Jesus is calling each one of YOU to see, to understand and to follow Him. In the busy-ness of your lives, don't become blind to the messes that begin to take over your lives.

In the many demands made on your time, your talent, your energy, look for, find and “see” the possibilities for doing good and for affirming yourself and one another.

Be counter-cultural. When your peers are slaves of self-absorption, self-centeredness and selfish desires, remember that Jesus Christ has given you a new spiritual insight to recognize Him, to fall in love with Him, and to follow Him “on the way” which He has marked out especially for you alone. Take courage; get up, Jesus is calling you! You may be seated. For now!

And a final message for all of us: There is so much that we are blind to in our lives, isn't there? We don't see the few pounds we've added until the pants don't button any more. We don't see the graying hairs and wrinkles until the waitress innocently asks us if we want the senior discount. We don't see the pain and hurt we cause until someone finally breaks down in tears.

What is sad is when everyone else around us sees what WE can't. How pathetic a 50-year-old looks dressing and acting like a teenager. How frustrating when an employer fails to see the worker who is destroying the rest of the team.

What makes the blind person so heroic in the Gospel today was his courage. He sprang up and without hesitation asked for the sight that will change his life beyond his imagination. He was not afraid to ask for it.

What are we afraid of? Why are we unwilling to ask to see things more clearly in our lives? What relationship needs to be reformed? What personal issue or concern needs to be confronted? What will change our lives dramatically if we are only able to see through it more clearly?

It is time to ask God for the sight we need to be the best person, the best version of ourselves we can be. God wants to help us and waits patiently for us only to ask. AMEN!