

October 28, 2018 - 30th Sunday in Ordinary Time

I was at a meeting this week with fellow priests and one of the pastors used a term I hadn't heard before. He said, "Our *winter parishioners* are coming back." Ha, wonderful! I'm going to use that from now on. There is going to be a distinction, our winter visitors or snowbirds, and our *winter parishioners*. Just don't cut me off in traffic or you'll become all 3 in one.

Second, many of you who normally sit in the front 3 rows are disoriented. That's because we have a function tonight after Mass, we are installing the first group of officers in our Knights of Columbus Council. As many of you know we have a council, we started in July and we now have 60 members. Yes! And they are chomping at the bit because the paperwork just doesn't go fast enough. So be advised that things are going to start happening here.

On the announcements, it said that tickets for the bazaar are *on sale*. It should say, *raffle tickets* are on sale for the bazaar, because that's what they are. We have many prizes that are for the bizarre; in fact I'm supposed to put together a "Spirit Basket." I don't know how they're going to sell that but that's what's going on. It's not a ticket to attend, it's a ticket for a raffle so we need to change that wording.

Also I just want to commend you on, now that every bodies coming back, I can actually hear your responses. It's this big wave coming over me, and it feels good.

A motorist with poor eyesight was driving through a dense fog and was trying desperately to stay within range of the tail lights of the car ahead of him. As he squinted and worried his way along trying to stay on course, the car in front suddenly stopped and his car hit the car in front. The driver of the rear car got out and demanded to know why the other driver came to an abrupt halt. The man in front said, "I had to, I'm in my own garage."

Today's reading in the gospel is about blindness. Blindness in the scriptures has two forms: real and spiritual. Most of the time if you read scriptures in the bible, you will see spiritual blindness. But sometimes they use a real blind person to convey that information. Jesus was leaving Jericho, Jericho is about ten miles from Jerusalem, but it's about 1900 feet below sea level. When you go to Jerusalem, Jerusalem is 2300 feet. So when you leave you say, "I'm going up to Jerusalem." Prior to this reading we had the gospel where James and John want to sit one on His right and one on the left of Jesus, because they misunderstand. So we see arrogance, we see pride, we see a lack of service in their attitude. And yet, we come into this next story in the gospel and we see something totally different. Bartimaeus, that's his last name. The translation, "Son of Timaeus," that's a redundant phrase. Bartimaeus means son of Timaeus. We would say Timaeus' son. He is begging, why? Because it's only three or four days, maybe six, before the Passover. The rule states that if you live within 15 or 20 miles of Jerusalem, you must go to the Passover. It's required. Not only that, people wanted to go to the Passover from farther away. So, these pilgrims start coming into the city early and so it's a great opportunity to make money if you can't walk, if you can't see, other things that keep you from being able to work. So he is begging, which is the only thing open for him. As he is begging, he is aware of what's going on because he has to listen. There are people who would come up and steal from him so he has to be aware of that. There are people that would come up and kick him because he's blind, because it's his fault, so he has to be aware of that. He is really blind but he sees more than most people. And he hears what people are saying. You know, we walk through Walmart, we listen at the restaurant, do we listen to what's going on around us? We try not to, but you know what? I do, because it's interesting. I live by myself, who am I going to listen

to? I start listening to you guys when you're out and about, very interesting. But that's what he's doing and he hears this incredible news. Awe struck voices when they talk about this Jesus of Nazareth. He also hears the pharisees talking about how much they hate Him; the sadducees, the scribes. How much they hate this Jesus of Nazareth, how He has thrown their lives into turmoil. How when He turned over the money changers tables and the money went all over; when He kicked the animals out of the Temple. This guy knew it, Bartimaeus knew it. So when he finds out this guy's coming by, guess what else he heard? Miracles; the blind see, the deaf hear. Bartimaeus doesn't know how to read but Bartimaeus can hear when people read in the synagogue, the scriptures and he memorized them. And he especially memorized the ones from Zacharia and Isaiah that say, "When the messiah comes, the blind will see, the deaf will hear, the dead will raise up." So he is paying very special attention and he's probably been praying, preparing himself for this day for a long time. When Jesus of Nazareth is coming and he hears it, he already knows who He is. Everyone else around doesn't know who He is. The Apostles don't know who He is for a long time. But he jumps up and says, "Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me." He calls Him by His royal title. He calls Him by a title that implies power, that implies healing, he knows who Jesus is and he can't see. And then what happens? Peer pressure, "Shut up, sit down! Leave Him alone. What would He want with you?" Does he let that bother him? No. He keeps calling out, even more. "Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me." Have pity on me, twice. Why? Not forgive me but have pity on me. "I'm a miserable wretch! I don't like my life, I don't like what's happening, nobody treats me with respect, I'm all alone, I need some help." That's what he's saying with have pity on me. That's when Jesus says, "Call him over here."

The blind man threw off the only thing he owned, his cloak. His blanket at night, his clothes during the day, everything he owned. Swoosh, that's how bad he wanted what he's going to get. To get rid of everything he owns, tremendous poverty. And then Jesus asks him, even though he doesn't have to, "What do you want me to do?" "Lord, that I may see, Lord that I may see, Master that I may see." Humility. And Jesus says, "I can work with this, I have power over this, you can see."

If you look at the studies and the experiments that have been done and the surgeries that have been done, if an adult person, blind from birth gets their vision back, they can't function. The part of the brain that has to do with the eyes is developed in the first two years of life. They can't function because the brain doesn't know what to do. They don't know how to deal with a car coming down the street or let alone that person. So, this healing had to heal the brain as well, Jesus healed the whole man. And He says, "Go on your way, you can go now." What does Bartimaeus do? Follows Jesus the rest of Jesus' life. One of the early Christians. We need to look at what happened. He realized that he did not want material possessions. He realized, money was not going to do him any good. Because when he threw his cloak off, he threw his money cup as well. He was so upset; he had to beg God. How many times in our lives have we been so down, so despondent and yet, we didn't call upon God? We said bad words, maybe cuss somebody out, blame somebody else, but we didn't ask God. "Have pity on me God! Let me have what I'm supposed to have." This man could see better than anybody else. And today, each one of us could be called Bartimaeus, the blind person, because there is a great spiritual blindness in our country today. Christians are getting caught up in the hate and the division that's going on in our country today. We should be calling out to God, why? "Help us, have pity on us." We get caught up in the argument, the name calling, thinking oh, that guy deserves a bullet between the eyes because I disagree with him. There was an interview with a feminist on TV, and she got furious about what's going on. She said, "The other side should be taken out." On TV she said this. The host said, "But wait a

minute, don't you think there's room for dialog and working together?" "No! My way or nothing!" We're getting to that point as Christians where we are no longer Christian. We are becoming spiritually blind. We need to turn away and come back to God. We need to realize that politics is not the answer. Realize that all the things that are going on around us that are causing dissention, we pray about it, we don't join in, we try and work for unity and peace through prayer. "Jesus, Son of David have pity on us! Have pity on the United States, have pity on the State of Arizona," on whoever you want but don't be blind. This man could see better than we could. Today we need to be able to emulate him, to imitate him. Do we want our sight back? Do we want to focus on who we are supposed to focus on? Jesus Christ. Not Donald Trump, not Nancy Pelosi or anybody else. Jesus Christ. Because, who is going to outlast Donald Trump, Nancy Pelosi, Hillary Clinton, anybody? Who's going to outlast them? Considering eternity, are they important? Only that we have to pray for their souls to get to heaven. Now that may be a chilling thought for some of you, that you are going to have to share heaven with *those* people! But God loves them just as much as He does us, and He wants them up there just as much, and He created them to be up there. Whether they go or not is their choice, but we are responsible for not falling into the divisions they're causing. We are responsible for having mercy as He has mercy on us. We look at Bartimaeus; this man wasn't so blind after all. He was actually seeing better than anybody else in the crowd in Jerusalem at that time. We can only use his prayer over and over again. It would be a great prayer, don't you think? Try and bring grace upon our families, upon our community, upon our country.

God bless you.