

Reflection for the 30th Sunday of Ordinary Time

What would you like? This question seems like a very neutral question and even a question that might seem to be empowering. But when I was a child around the age of 7 or 8 this question would make me very nervous. This question “*what would you like*” was normally asked of me by my Dad when we would stop for a break on a trip. This question would take place when my parents would let me, and my 3 sisters know that at the gas station we could have an ice cream of our choice from the freezer. This for me was always a stressful moment, my Mother and three Sisters always chose the same type of ice cream. My Dad would choose an ice cream sandwich or a nutty buddy. I for my part just could not decide as quickly as the rest of my family did, just too many choices. So, when my Dad decided to ask me “*what would you like*,” I knew I had ran out of time and I had better choose my ice cream quickly. I will have to admit whenever I chose my ice cream after my Dad asked me “*what would you like*,” I always felt like I made the wrong decision. Looking back on that time, I wonder how I could make the wrong decision when choosing ice cream, it is all good.

Well, today in our Gospel Reading taken from the Gospel of Mark, we hear of a man, Bartimaeus being asked by Jesus, “*what do you want me to do for you?*” Bartimaeus, knew what he wanted and so he said to Jesus, “*I want to see.*” This man the son of Timaeus, who was blind called out to Jesus asking for help. This man would not be silenced by the crowd outside of Jericho who tried to keep him quiet. He was determined to have Jesus respond to his request. Once Bartimaeus received his miracle from Jesus, he followed Him on the way.

Bartimaeus, in our Gospel Reading this Sunday provides us with an example of how each one of us should respond to the question of Jesus Christ asking us “*what do you want me to do for you?*” The response of Bartimaeus is one that we can all be inspired by for when the question was asked of him by Jesus Christ, he was ready for the question and knew how to answer. What we can take from Bartimaeus’ answer to Jesus is that we should know what we want, what we are looking for and then when the opportunity presents itself, we will be ready to respond. If this is what we take from our Gospel Reading this Sunday, we might be missing the true message that is given to us on the 30th Sunday of Ordinary Time.

To have a full understanding of our Gospel message this Sunday we need to go back to the start of the encounter that Jesus has with Bartimaeus. Jesus is leaving Jericho with his disciples and a sizable crowd. He is on a journey from Capernaum to Jerusalem where Jesus will be condemned to death, die and rise on the third day. The three predictions of Jesus’ death and resurrection that Jesus shares with His disciples that are found in the Gospel of Mark have already taken place. Keeping all this in mind as Jesus and His followers resume their journey to Jerusalem, we hear of Bartimaeus, a blind man being informed that “*Jesus of Nazareth*” is passing by. So Bartimaeus calls out “*Jesus Son of David, have pity on me.*” It is important to note that Bartimaeus uses the title “*Son of David*,” for Jesus, not referring to Him as “*Jesus of Nazareth*.” This might seem like a very subtle difference, but this change in title is anything but subtle. Bartimaeus by using the title “*Son of David*,” for Jesus, he is declaring Him to be the Son of God, the Messiah, the Savior of the World.

Knowing that Jesus had already foretold His death and resurrection, not once but three times. Bartimaeus is taking a risk and looking for much more than physical sight. He is looking for spiritual sight, once he receives his sight he follows Jesus on the way. Before Bartimaeus heard that Jesus was heading his way he knew who Jesus was, the Son of God, the Messiah. So, when his prayers are answered and Jesus is passing by him, there was just one thing for him to do, and that is to cry out to Jesus, informing Him and everyone in ear-shot who Jesus is, the Messiah. Bartimaeus is not an opportunist who discovered a chance to regain his sight, rather he is a man who grew to know who Jesus is and wanted to take the next step in his faith journey. The message that we should take from our Gospel Reading this day is that we as a people of faith should grow in our faith and embrace every opportunity to take our next step in our faith journey relying on our Savior. So, when we are asked “*what do you want me to do for you?*” We can respond not as an opportunist, but as people of deep faith looking to take one step closer to our Lord.