

# CONNECT! SUNDAY REFLECTION

30th Sunday in Ordinary Time | For Sunday, October 28th, 2018

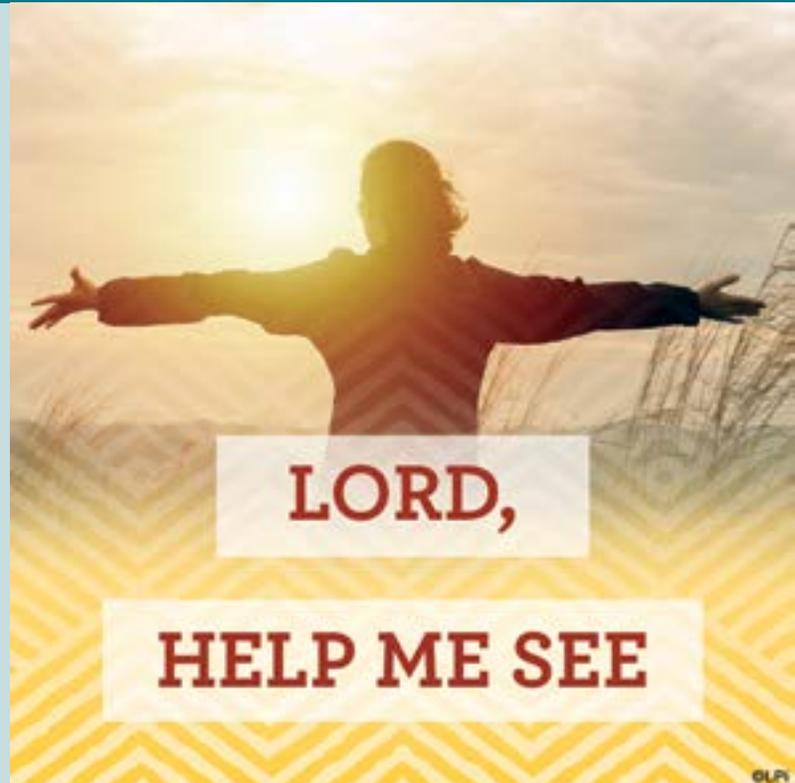
## Bounded by Our Spiritual Blindness

Written by Br. Silas Henderson, S.D.S.

Jeremiah 31:7-9

Hebrews 5:1-6

Mark 10:46-52



When I moved to Los Angeles from southern Indiana, one of the realities I had to adjust to was the large number of homeless people found in nearly every part of the sprawling city. And now, even after two years, I still sometimes find myself embarrassed and disconcerted by the extended hands or incoherent mumbling. This is a challenging reality, especially when I remember that as Christians we're called to be people of encounter.

With all this in mind, it's easy to understand the discomfort that Jesus' followers seemed to have felt in this Sunday's passage from the Gospel of Mark. After all, the blind man, Bartimaeus, was causing a spectacle, shouting at Jesus. But even after the people in the crowd told him to be quiet, "he kept calling out all the more, 'Son of David, have pity on me.'"

To really get a sense of the importance of this story — which is much more than just another account of one of Jesus' miracles — we have to think about where it falls in the Gospel of Mark. The healing of the blind Bartimaeus is, in fact, linked to the healing of another blind man recounted only a few chapters earlier (Mark 8:22-26). These two stories form bookends for one of the most important sections of Mark's Gospel, where Jesus tries to help his followers understand who he is and what his mission really is. But as we've discovered over the past several Sundays, the Apostles and the other disciples don't seem to comprehend Jesus' message or to understand the true cost and meaning of discipleship. After all, these are the same men who openly opposed him when Jesus tried to teach them about his coming suffering and death.

But then this Sunday, we are given the story of this blind beggar who seems to be able to see what the Apostles cannot. In fact, the physical healing of Bartimaeus is a powerful reminder that when we open ourselves to God's grace, we can be healed of that blindness of spirit that sometimes prevents us from following Jesus with freedom and joy, which is an important part of discipleship.

In a 2012 homily, Pope Benedict XVI reflected:

*“Bartimaeus represents one who has lost the light and knows it, but has not lost hope: he knows how to seize the opportunity to encounter Jesus and he entrusts himself to him for healing. Indeed, when he hears that the Master is passing along the road, he cries out: ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!’ and he repeats it even louder. And when Jesus calls him and asks what he wants from him, he replies: ‘Master, let me receive my sight!’ Bartimaeus represents one aware of his pain and crying out to the Lord, confident of being healed. In the encounter with Christ, lived with faith, Bartimaeus regains the light he had lost, and with it the fullness of his dignity: he gets back onto his feet and resumes the journey, which from that moment has a guide, Jesus, and a path, the same that Jesus is traveling. The evangelist tells us nothing more about Bartimaeus, but in him he shows us what discipleship is: following Jesus ‘along the way,’ in the light of faith.”*

St. Mark beautifully describes Bartimaeus’ excitement when Jesus finally calls for him: *“He threw aside his cloak, sprang up, and came to Jesus.”* There is an energy in his response that powerfully exemplifies the enthusiasm that should be a hallmark of disciples. When the Lord calls, we must be ready to respond. And because of his faith and willingness to act, Jesus rewards the blind man by not only restoring his physical sight but by empowering him to live out his faith in the community of disciples.

The invitation for us this Sunday is to humbly reflect on the ways we might be spiritually blind by asking ourselves what habits, attitudes, and ideologies hold us back from becoming the disciples that Jesus is calling us to be.

*Br. Silas Henderson, S.D.S.*

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LPi  
2875 S. James Drive  
New Berlin, WI 53151  
(800) 950-9952 ext. 2469

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## PRAYER

Almighty ever-living God,  
increase our faith, hope, and charity,  
and make us love what you command,  
so that we may merit what you promise.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.  
Amen.

- from *The Roman Missal*