

Quinquagesima Sunday- EF 2013
Luke 18: 21-43
Dcn. Pat Hall

Jesu, fili David, miserere mei.
Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.

St. John Chrysostom of the 4th Century noticed that the blind man had been told one thing and cried out another.ⁱ He was told it was *Jesus of Nazareth* and yet he called out to *Jesus, the Son of David*. This is the first time in the Gospel of Luke that Jesus is referred to with that messianic title. How did the blind man know? By whose power but God's could he see what sighted people could not?

Could it be that the crowd was too enthralled with the spectacles of the itinerant faith healer from Nazareth to understand who Jesus truly is? Jesus' healings are signs of revelation, but many could not see beyond the event to embrace God as incarnate in their midst going up to Jerusalem. Were their hearts too small or closed to receive the grace available to all? This blind beggar had the heart to call out to Jesus... to fill his heart.

Jesus responded to his plea, *Thy faith hath made thee whole*. Not by the blind man's power, but, by the outpouring of divine grace was he healed.

The beggar's response was to glorify God and to follow Jesus. Follow Jesus to where?

The reason Jesus was travelling towards Jericho was that it was on his way to Jerusalem where he would encounter the upper room, the garden, the cross and the tomb.

Jesus prophesied being delivered to the Gentiles to be mocked, scourged, spat upon and to be put to death. This is the way of Jesus. While giving glory to God, this is the way the sighted beggar chose to follow.

Bishop James Murray commented, "His faith was rewarded with healing. His gratitude compelled him to follow Jesus up to the road to Jerusalem where pain and death awaited. There, pain would be conquered by love, death by His resurrection."ⁱⁱ

We are called to follow the way of Jesus. The way is not easy. We all have experienced trials on the way. One of the reasons we come here is to receive Jesus' consolation, encouragement and healing along the way. We come to deepen our faith. We find deeper faith when we enter into Jesus' paschal mystery through his true presence, his Body and Blood.

We receive that encouragement in his presence found in the ones around us, his body the Church, his body the parishioners of St. Mary's, his body the Diocese of Kalamazoo. It is through the faith we share that we receive encouragement from our compassionate God.

St. Paul said, "[God] encourages us in our every affliction, so that we may be able to encourage those who are in any affliction with the encouragement with which we ourselves are encouraged by God. For as Christ's sufferings overflow to us, so through Christ does our encouragement also overflow. (2Cor 1: 4-5)

Enter more deeply into your faith by sharing your faith. We do that by coming together on Sundays at noon for worship rooted in the centuries of our tradition. We do that when we participate in the life of our parish, our family in mission with Christ and our patroness, our Holy Mother, in love and service for God and neighbor. We do so as part of our larger family, the Diocese of Kalamazoo, the Church shepherded by Bishop Paul Bradley, successor to the apostles of Christ.

This year has been designated by Pope Benedict XVI as the Year of Faith. In kind, the diocese is sponsoring a diocesan Day of Reflection to be celebrated in each deanery on Saturday, February 23. St. Catherine of Siena Parish will be hosting that day for our central deanery.

I remember my awakening to our *greater* Church at World Youth Day in Toronto, when hundreds of thousands gathered under hundreds of nations' flags as one people, one Church. I look upon this Day of Reflection as an opportunity to deepen faith with our sister parishes, our greater Church.

This isn't our only opportunity to deepen our faith as we begin our Lenten journey towards Jerusalem. You can join our St. Mary's Bible study on Wednesday evenings after Mass. You can participate in the 40 Days for Life campaign against abortion by 40 days of prayer and fasting, 40 days of peaceful vigil at our local abortion clinic and 40 days of community outreach such as serving the hungry at Loaves and Fishes or the homeless at Ministry with Community. All are on the way towards Jerusalem.

Open your hearts to the grace offered you. Cry out, *Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me*. Receive his healing. Allow Jesus to make you whole. While suffering, pain and even death are to be expected on the way, live with the faith and hope of rising again, to live fully forever in the love of God.

Ite. Go forth. Be of faith. May God have mercy on you. Glorify God and follow Jesus to Jerusalem.

ⁱ St. John Chrysostom, *The Sunday Sermons of the Great Fathers*, v. 1, p. 415

ⁱⁱ The Most Rev. James A. Murray, *Rejoice in the Lord Always*, p. 179