

Readings: [Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time | USCCB](#)

Guess what... it's almost the end of the year! Pretty soon everything will start wrapping up. I already started seeing some countdowns begin to happen as people look back at the year... Top Songs. Top Movies. Just a couple of days ago there was an article on Top Headlines of the Year (so far), those new events that were deemed important and significant enough for the world, or at least the nation, to know about.

Chaos at the Capital

Joe Biden is inaugurated as the 46th President

Jeff Bezos steps down

Civil War in Ethiopia Continues

Holy Spirit Parish gets new Priest (I'm pretty sure that one made top news)

US Troops leave Afghanistan, Taliban Takes Over

Vaccine mandate creates conflict

Squid Game becomes most watched Netflix show

Actor Alec Ballwin fires prop gun, kills director of photography

Now I think a good news writer is able to give you just enough information, the important details, in a way that draws you into the story... here is what we know happened and where, these are the people involved, here is why it matter, and this is what it could mean for the future.

The gospels are similar, they are accounts of just some of the many events that happened during the ministry of Jesus, events that were so important and significant, they had to be written down after a few decades them being passed down orally.

And near the end of the gospels, they start wrapping it up, putting it all together, as is the case with what we just heard from the gospel of Mark written with the quality of a good reporter. In a way that draws you into the scene, this account is often used in retreats, as spiritual reading, because of all the meaning behind just about every sentence, not to mention the deeply personal dialogue... We can all relate with moments of our live where we were spiritually or socially blind... of calling out to God in desperation... we can imagine what it would be like to hear that Jesus is calling out to you personally, what we would respond to Jesus asking, “what do you want me to do for you?”

I’d like to do two things with you today: offer a brief exegesis (explanation) of just some of the details given to us in the gospel, and then together discern how this might be challenging us today as a Church.

So first, let’s look at this news report, the what, who, where, when and why...

What happened? A blind man who is obviously poor and reduced to a beggar, is suddenly healed and his sight restored.

Who is involved? First, we have a man named Jesus who is walking along with his disciples and a large crowd. The name Jesus itself is from the Hebrew Yeshu’a which is a compound word between

ya for yawhe, and shua'h for salvatioin, so Jesus means “the Lord saves.”

Then we have the blind man identified by the name Bartimaeus. In Hebrew, the name Bartimaeus is composed of the word *bar* (son) and *tame* which means unclean, so *Bartamaeus* means the “unclean son” or “son of defilement.” If you were looking for a baby name, don’t go with Bartimaeus....

He must have gotten this name because he was blind, and it was thought a people born with any disabilities were born that way as a punishment for the sins of their parents, so anyone punished by God obviously had no rights since they were unclean. However, in Greek, which is the language the event is written in, the word *tam* is translated as *tim*, and *tim* means, not unclean, but honor... Bartimaeus, “the son of Honor.” What does this tell us? That where people saw defilement, Jesus saw honor, and what Jesus did here was more than just restore his sight, he restored his dignity and *saved* his identity, called him out of the lie that he was unclean, and into a place of honor.

Where does the event happen? On the road to Jericho. What do we know about this place? Well, after Moses lead the people out of Egypt and towards the promise land, Jerusalem, it was here where they had their last stop, and it was here, Jericho, where Moses died. So, it was then up to *Joshua* to finish the task, and leads people into Jerusalem, the promise land, which is about 15 miles away. Joshua just so happens to share a similar name to Yeshu’a, and Joshua means “may the Lord help him.” So, Jericho, the place where Joshua (“the Lord help him”) led

people into the promise land, is now the place where Jesus (“the Lord Saves”) heals Bartimaeus.

When did the event occur? It happened at the end of Jesus’ teaching ministry. It’s the last healing account before he himself enters the final stretch into Jerusalem, where the “promise land” ends up becoming Calvary as he is later arrested and killed.

Why is it significant? On two fronts. **First**, like an end of the year report, it wraps up the teaching on **discipleship**... It takes all of the events from the entire ministry, all the past Sundays, all the teachings on prayer, service, humility, suffering, and they come together in this one story. It gives us, in Bartimaeus, the living example of what the disciples were unable to do. For example:

Jesus asked the disciples “who do people say that I am?” Yet they could not figure it out... “some say Elijah, others John the Baptist...” almost as if it didn’t really matter to them as long as they were part of the team... yet Bartimaeus immediately recognizes Jesus and calls him by his messianic title Son of David.

Jesus asked the disciples to leave it all behind, to not depend on material things for eternal security, but they couldn’t. Even the last person, the rich young man, walked away sad. Yet, Bartimaeus immediately takes off his cloak, the only thing he owned, his only worldly possession, source of security and protection, leaves it behind as he approaches Jesus.

The disciples kept asking Jesus for places of honor, for them to be the greatest. Yet, given the question “what do you want me to do for you” Bartimaeus wanted to see, wanted to be saved... and in asking for

what really is important, to experience the love and mercy of God, that is where he receives real honor... BarTAMaous no more, he is now BarTIMaous, the son of honor.

Jesus kept asking the disciples to follow him towards the cross, but they kept ignoring it, or they ran away from suffering. Yet, after receiving his sight, Bartimaeus immediately followed Jesus... follows him to Jerusalem, right in the path of the cross, right towards the suffering that was to come... follows him on the way. The Way, by the way, was how the early Christians described the Christian way of life... Jesus is The Way... meaning, that Bartimaeus chose Christian discipleship, the new way of life, and thus becomes what Jesus has been asking of the disciples.

The second significance lies on the contrasts between the words of the crowd, and the action of the disciples. The crowd was trying to silence Bartimeous, trying to keep him “the son of defilement” but Jesus told them to call him... and when they approach him, they say “take courage; get up, Jesus is calling you.”

What Jesus is doing is giving us the mission, the model for being Church, and by Church, I mean both you and I as members of the body of Christ, and also those in leadership, our bishops and pope. We see here Jesus structuring how discipleship is to happen in his absence, where it is the Church who is to recognize who are the people in the margins, who are the people wounded by sin, who have lost their identity, and calls them towards Jesus, to have hope because they matter, because they indeed have honor.

There is so much in this event, we only scratched the surface, but with that, I'd like to transition now to how this even can help us understand where to go from here and what his happening in the Church today...

If you are up on your Catholic world news, you probably heard about the Synod for Sodality that is happening. Synod means "to walk with." We have synods often about different aspects of the world and the Church. There was the synod on the family, on the environment, on youth etc.

The Synod on synodality, which sounds redundant, is how Pope Francis is trying to help us implement the rich new understanding on the nature of the Church that came after the Second Vatican council, and there is still so much to do so that the vision that the Holy Spirit gave the Church in the council can unfold, it was more than just reforming the liturgy so we can have a greater participation at mass by celebrating it in our own language.

But to get there, we have to return to the basics, by doing what Jesus instructed the disciples to do in the gospel, so that we are the ones asking telling people to take courage, get up, I see you, and your voice, your thought, your opinion, your need is important.

What does this mean for us? That in the next two years, we all have a chance to make our voices heard. Many of us often feel like our voices don't matter, and often that is how we are treated. Sometimes people in the Church take the side of the crowd and dimmish voices that might seem foreign, and as a result people end up leaving the church because they feel like they are not being herd, or they don't belong.

What will happen is that every parish will enter into a stage of listening. Every parish in the world will have a representative to hold listening sessions and give us all, children, youth, adults, an opportunity to answer the question: what do you want Jesus to do you for you. What do you need from the Church? The feedback will be compiled into one main report, and this report will be the guide for those in leadership, the pope, bishops and cardinals, to see where the Spirit is leading us. It is an important time of the Church, one that in centuries will go down in history as one of those “main events” to be known because of its importance.

I ask that as we learn more about this process and slowly begin to implement it here, that you take it to heart, start thinking about that question: what do you need Jesus, through mother Church, do for you?

+ *Fr. Carlos*