

30 Sunday B

October 28, 2018

St. Patrick

“Jesus said to him, ‘What do you want me to do for you?’ The blind man replied, ‘Master, I want to see.’”

It happens very rarely in a diocese, and it happened to *us* this past week. Pope Francis “removed from the pastoral care of the Diocese of Memphis” Bishop Martin Holley. In the official statements from the Vatican, and also from Archbishop Joseph Kurtz, who will oversee our diocese until a new bishop is named—well, the reasons aren’t really given. We can surmise and toss about our theories.

St. Patrick’s: I call us instead that we keep being “church” here at St. Patrick’s. Quite frankly, in all the turmoil and uncertainty of the recent months, I’ve been very grateful that you, and I, have kept out of the drama. You’ve rolled up your sleeves and tried to carry out Jesus’ ministry in our daily lives. I’m very pleased that 111 of us parishioners are gathering weekly in our small-group reflections on the Beatitudes. This week I went back to Pope Francis’ booklet, and found his thoughts that had stayed with me on the beatitude, “Blessed are the peacemakers.” I needed to hear again what he writes, “This Beatitude makes us think of the many endless situations of war in our world. Yet we ourselves are often a cause of conflict or at least misunderstanding. For example, I may hear something about someone and I go off and repeat it. I may even embellish it the second time around and keep spreading it...And the more harm it does, the more satisfaction I seem to derive from it. The world of gossip, inhabited by negative and destructive people, does not bring peace...In no way are they blessed” (#87).

Instead, let’s pray for, and work toward, healing. Within our wider diocese of West Tennessee, we *need* that healing.

“Jesus said to him, ‘What do you want me to do for you?’ The blind man replied, ‘Master, I want to see.’”

Lately bishops have been given a bad rap, highly criticized. And, in many cases, that criticism has been warranted. Two weeks ago Pope Francis canonized a bishop who was really blind to the heart of the gospel for most of his life. Like

what happened to the twelve apostles after Jesus' resurrection, grace overtook this bishop. He was transformed, and he *saw*.

Thirty years ago Oscar Romero was named Archbishop of San Salvador, thus becoming the religious leader of that Central American nation, El Salvador. It was a 'safe' choice as a bishop. He was known for his piety, a timid cleric, at times struggling with depression and fear. He distanced himself from the injustices against the poor and the violence that rocked his country. Soon after Oscar Romero became archbishop, conversion happened. He found himself officiating at the funeral Mass of a friend, a Jesuit priest by the name of Father Rutilo Grande, who had been assassinated because of his commitment to the poor and to Gospel justice. Then, grace changed Romero, healing his Gospel blindness. Untiringly he spoke out, from the vantage point of the Gospel, on behalf of the poor peasants, the injustices heaped on them by the powerful. As he preached powerfully, **"A church that does not unite itself to the poor in order to denounce from the place of the poor the injustice committed against them is not truly the Church of Jesus Christ."**

The military and death squads couldn't take him anymore. One evening Archbishop Romero was celebrating Mass. He kissed the altar at its beginning. Right after the moment of consecration at the Mass, a single rifle shot was fired from the back of the chapel. Archbishop Romero was killed—his blood intermingling with Christ's blood on the sacred altar. He truly followed Jesus on his Master's "way"—to the cross.

In today's Gospel reading—Did you notice it?—What was the *first* thing the blind beggar did when Jesus called him? You may have missed the phrase. St. Mark's Gospel is the shortest of the four gospels, and every phrase in this gospel is packed with meaning. St. Mark's Gospel says he **"threw aside his cloak."** It was the only thing Bartimaeus owned. The blind beggar used it for folks to toss their coins upon; at night he used it to cover himself from the cold. He tossed his cloak aside when he really *saw* Jesus with insight, not eyesight.

Two Sundays ago we heard of another man—Do you remember? He was very rich, kept all the commandments, and wanted to be part of Jesus' company. Surprisingly, he was the only person in St. Mark's Gospel in which it says, specifically, that Jesus **"loved"** him. And Jesus called him precisely at the point of his bank assets...and the rich man walked away. He had choices, and he wanted his wealth more than he wanted to be Jesus' disciple.

The blind beggar truly *saw* Jesus, and he freely, eagerly “**threw aside his cloak**”—all that he owned. Then Bartimaeus followed Jesus on his way to the cross.

St. Patrick’s: If each of us wants to follow Jesus, what do we need to throw aside *this* Sunday? Oh, we’ve talked about bishops. Thirty years ago our bishop then, Daniel Buechlein, once said to me in a one-on-one meeting, “Val, you are a very angry man.” If he had swung a skillet across my face, it would have not stung me as much. Ten years ago, when he returned here from where he served in Indianapolis, I thanked him. It helped prompt me, together with prayer and much effort, to “throw aside the cloak” of anger.

What about you? Which “cloak” do you need to throw aside? The cloak of fear? Or of anger, gossip, or resentment? Do we need to throw aside any doubts that Jesus truly does see *us* and wants *us*? Are we also held back by too much “stuff”?

After Archbishop Oscar Romero truly could see...after the blind Bartimaeus truly could see...both of them followed Jesus “on the way”—to the cross. That, my friends, is the litmus test that *we* really see.

General Intercessions

October 28, 2018

30th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Heal your church of every kind of blindness, and lead us to reflect with integrity the light of Christ to all the world; we pray to you, O Lord—

Grace us, the Church of West Tennessee, with healing, renewal and hope during this time of transition; and, make a wise choice of the new Bishop of Memphis; we pray to you, O Lord—

Be with Bishop Martin Holley in his future with rest, recovery and a fruitful ministry to others; we pray to you, O Lord—

During this “Respect Life” month, give us vision truly to reverence all human life—especially those on the fringe and those who are strangers in our midst; we pray to you, O Lord—

Support and uphold caretakers of those who suffer mental illness; we pray to you, O Lord—

Grant newness of life to all who have died as God's blessed children, especially the eleven from the Pittsburgh synagogue who were murdered yesterday; we pray to you, O Lord—