

30th Sunday In Ordinary Time Year B 2006 Jer 31:7-9; Mk 10:46-52

1. During my third year of seminary, we had a spiritual director who tried to shake things up.
 - a. So he invited priests who were working with the marginalized, the poor, and minorities to come and give talks on Tuesday afternoons.
2. The very first priest invited was someone who worked with the families of AIDS patients.
 - a. But when we arrived that Tuesday we were surprised to find a faculty member
 - i. who gave us an hour long talk on Christian virtue.
3. We soon found out that when the faculty heard
 - a. that we were going to hear about ministry to AIDS patients
 - i. they went ballistic;
 - b. They had to protect us from “those kinds” of priests;
 - c. But what was this priest doing that made him one of “those priests”?
 - i. He sat with AIDS patients when they told their families,
 - ii. He prayed with them
 - iii. He offered them pastoral care
 - d. Nevertheless the seminary insisted that the spiritual director disinvite that priest and end his lecture program.
4. We all wondered, how do they ever expect us to minister to the world
 - i. if they keep us from learning about it?
 - b. But that was the point; they did not want us to minister *to* the world;
 - i. if by the world we mean everybody;
 - c. they believed that their job was to produce priests who would serve those Catholics who were “really Catholic”
 - i. And create that faithful remnant in the midst of a sinful world.
 - d. And evidently a priest who worked with AIDS patients
 - i. was not a model for that type of ministry.
5. Perhaps you are shocked by this story; I still am.
 - a. After all, these were seminary professors; if anyone should see
 - i. that we as Catholics should minister to everyone,
 - ii. that the very meaning of the word Catholic is universal(1) it is seminary professors.
6. But then maybe we should not be so shocked; we hear similar stories all the time.
 - a. **Politicians** who provoke us by telling us we are in danger
 - b. **Pundits** who manipulate us by telling us our American way of life is dying
 - c. **Clergy** who cajole us into condemning people who are different than us,
 - i. because we are that faithful remnant,
 - ii. and thus we need to be protected from the contamination of others, whoever they are.
7. The idea of a faithful remnant has deep roots in our faith;
 - a. **We encounter it** in recent statements of our Holy Father who has said that the Catholic Church is becoming a minority in world, in short, a faithful remnant.
 - b. **We see it** in the actions of Jesus as he calls people to follow him and become part of HIS community;
 - i. not the least of which a blind man called Bartimaeus in today’s Gospel.
 - c. **We even find it** in the words of the Prophet Jeremiah, who in today’s first reading speaks about that faithful remnant who will survive the destruction of Jerusalem and the deportation of his people to Babylon.

8. All of it points to the idea that God’s people are a people called out of the world to be

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different, a faithful a holy remnant.

- a. And yet there is a difference, isn't there?
 - i. For when the politician speaks, the pundit opines and the preachers preach what do we hear behind their words of warning? Fear.
 - (1) Fear is what they seek to communicate to us;
 - (2) so that we will listen to them, support them and follow them
 - (3) because we have been made to feel that fear too.
9. Now the people who were listening to Jeremiah had seen their land destroyed
 - a. And believed that this had happened because God was punishing them;
 - i. **if anyone had reason to fear it was they.**
10. And poor ole' blind Bartimaeus, sitting by the side of the road as Jesus passed by
 - a. bore the stigma that everyone believed back then;
 - b. that things such as blindness were God's punishment due to sin
 - i. **if any one had reason to fear it was he.**
11. Both the people of Judah and Blind Bartimaeus:
 - a. afraid that they were being punished because they were sinners,
 - b. and thus were unworthy of God's holy remnant;
12. But when Jeremiah speaks to his people he doesn't speak of fear, but of joy
 - a. **Why?** because God's holy remnant
 - i. isn't some leftover from a failed nation
 - (1) which includes only holy people;
 - ii. It is a community where all are invited,
 - (1) even the lame and yes, even the blind.
13. And when Jesus meets Bartimaeus, he does not speak of sin but of wholeness,
 - a. And demonstrates it when he heals Bartimaeus of his blindness, **why?**
 - b. Because amidst all the people with eyes that worked,
 - i. Bartimaeus was the one who saw Jesus for who he truly was
 - ii. and knew that some how, if all he did was try to follow him on the way
 - iii. he would be part of a community that would never reject him because he was not whole;
 - iv. And it was that faith that in fact healed him and made him whole.
14. And when Pope Benedict speaks of this community he never sees it as a gated community for the holy; rather, he calls it "a witness before the world to the love of the Father, who wishes to make humanity a single family in his Son."
15. And thus we must ask ourselves;
 - a. Who belongs to this remnant?
16. We know who they were in Jeremiah's day;
 - a. they were the blind and the lame, the women and the children all those who had no rights or place in society; for they were the ones Jeremiah called into his remnant
17. We know who they were in Jesus day,
 - a. there were the people like Bartimaeus, left to beg at the side of the road by others but healed and accepted by Jesus
18. And thus we know who they are in our own.
 - a. They are not the people who sit in church content that God is on their side,
 - i. and thus don't need to be included because they already are,
 - ii. don't need to be forgiven because they are already saved
 - iii. and don't need healing because they can see quite well, (thank you very

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- much!)
- b. They are the others who might want to sit in church but don't always
 - i. Because they are unsure of what is true, yet they want to believe,
 - ii. Are critical of what they see in the institution, yet they want to belong
 - iii. Hate what they see said and done in the name of God,
 - (1) yet deep down yearn to find a God who is love.
 - iv. People, who see only that they do not see ,
 - (1) yet because of this have room in their hearts for a faith that those who think they see it all never will.
- 19. They are the ones Jeremiah called and Jesus healed and Benedict says we should love- because God does. They are that holy remnant.
 - a. And when we recognize our need for faith, our need for forgiveness, our need for community; in short when we are honest with ourselves and recognize our need for God, then we are that remnant too.
- 20. Thus while the people of God might be a holy remnant
 - a. It can never be what politicians pundits and even some priests want it to be: a community formed in fear,
 - b. But rather what Jeremiah predicted it would be,
 - c. Jesus called it to be,
 - d. and our pope wants it to be:
 - e. a church set in the midst of a world
 - i. we can never be indifferent to
 - ii. never be closed to,
 - iii. never reject
 - iv. but only serve and love.
 - v. For that is what it means to be a universal Church;
 - vi. that is what it means to be Catholic.