

From The Pastor

As has been the consistent wisdom of the medical community in light of the flu season, we are encouraging all church members to wash their hands before coming to Mass and on their return home. If you are not feeling well, or if you already have a cold, please stay home to minimize the risk spreading harmful germs. Please cough into your sleeve or a handkerchief, rather than into your hand that will make direct contact with others.

Should the flu become prevalent in our area, we are prepared to provide hand sanitizer for all Eucharistic ministers. Hand sanitizer is available in the sacristy and all ministers are encouraged to use it. If or when needed, we will set up stations on either side of the altar so that ministers can 'wash' again immediately before distributing communion. Thank you for your conscientious efforts in this matter. Please direct and supervise your children in washing their hands regularly.

The new cement work will be completed soon, if not already. Please follow and obey all barricades for your safety, and for the protection of the new cement. Please be very careful to not drive or park your car on the approach to the church entrance if you are dropping someone off. The cement is not designed to handle the weight of a car. Please be attentive to keep all four wheels of your vehicle on the asphalt surface. Thank you very much.

Fifteen people enjoyed a wonderful morning at the Women's Sweetest Day breakfast. A good time was had by all. Many were deeply moved and appreciated the scripture reflection and sharing. I am grateful to Mary Ann Przybysz for sharing her time and insightful spirit in so generous a way. Please stay tuned for a repeat of this successful event. Faith Ball has begun her bible study after the morning Mass on Wednesdays. Fifteen or so have joined her. Please feel welcome to join.

Within a few weeks, the new firewall required by code for the Charter School will be ready for installation. There will be some disturbance to our worship space for two or three weeks. Final details and scheduling are not yet firm. Please be patient with the construction process. More details to follow as they become available.

Thank you for your response to recent appeals. Your generosity matters and is noticed. Further tree donations are welcome, as a memorial if you wish. As funds come in, we will purchase and plant more trees. Thank you.

In today's gospel, the story of Bartimaeus is a powerful expression of faith and desire. For a blind man, his request and desire would seem obvious. Yet, there is more than meets the eye. It is quite possible that this is an actual and literal story. Blind beggars were very common along the roads of most towns and villages. Diseases of the eye were common and not very treatable at that time. This may be why the crowd was so quick to tell the man to be quiet. He was just one beggar among many clamoring for Jesus' attention.

Spiritually, blindness is an expression of an inability to notice, accept, or understand life beyond the literal and the obvious. In other words, there is no inner depth or awareness in such a person. Life is all on the surface, and nothing more is desired. This is not the case with Bartimaeus. This man has passion and desire, and he is not going to be hushed by a resistant crowd. Are we not embarrassed by the outspoken passion of others? Although we may very much agree with the issue, the emotional intensity of such public expression puts most people on edge. Interesting that the whole mood toward this man shifts once Jesus calls him forward; now the crowd is supportive and encouraging. As Jesus sees the man's faith and calls him forward the crowd responds with respect and hope.

On the surface, this is a simple story of healing a blind man. For those who seek a more spiritual way, there is more. Physical sight is an obvious need, yet Jesus asks, 'what do you want me to do for you'? This is a personal and telling question. On the surface, the man could simply say, Master, restore my sight, but instead he replies, 'Master, I want to see'. This is clear and unambiguous. This man knows himself, and he knows what he wants. This man knows his deepest desire. His life as a blind beggar has shown him the inner spiritual world. His faith and desire motivates him to want to see Jesus, in whom he has put his trust. Perceiving the man's desire of heart and active faith, Jesus immediately responds with healing and affirmation: 'Go, your faith has made you whole'. Now, with both physical and spiritual sight, Bartimaeus puts that faith into action by following Jesus up the road.

In this story, Bartimaeus gains his sight because of his desire. Jesus sees the intensity of a heart ready to be healed and set free. This man knows what he wants and is not going to be put off for the sake of a little trouble or effort. His desire for wholeness is not put off by the taunts of an impatient crowd, or his lowly position as a poor beggar. Bartimaeus is an example of a true disciple of Jesus. He looks and lives beyond the obvious comforts of personal security and comfort. He is willing to risk himself to find the freedom of his heart's desire. His risk and his faith are rewarded. What is your deepest desire for Jesus? What can Jesus do for you? What will you allow Jesus to do?

Father John Esper