

30th Sunday in Ordinary Time

One of the things I've learned from gamblers is that people have a "tell" – something they do that gives them away. If you are trying to bluff at a card game, but every time you try your left eye starts twitching—that's a tell, and your opponents, if they are good card players, will keep an eye out for such behaviors and respond accordingly.

There's a tell in today's gospel. Bartimaeus says to Jesus that he wants to see, and there's no reason not to believe him. But the tell is that, when Jesus tells his disciples to call Bartimaeus over, he "threw aside his cloak, sprang up, and came to Jesus."

What's that about? Why throw off your cloak if you want to see? Seems like Jesus could have cured him with or without the cloak.

"Seeing" for Bartimaeus certainly included gaining physical eyesight, but another tell in the story is that, when Bartimaeus had received his sight he followed Jesus on the way.

It appears to me that, from the very beginning of the encounter, we have a case in which a person is trying to get a deeper awareness of who Jesus is and what the kingdom is that Jesus is proclaiming. The "seeing" that Bartimaeus wants to do goes beyond physical eyesight.

30th Sunday in Ordinary Time

This encounter occurs just as Jesus is leaving Jericho with his disciples. Bartimaeus has already decided that Jesus deserves the title “Son of David.” There is a kingly quality to Jesus that is apparent even to the blind.

One of the responsibilities of the king was to take care of those members of society who could not fend for themselves: widows and orphans are usually named in this regard, but also the blind, the lame, all those with physical disabilities, and foreigners in the land.

Bartimaeus lays claim to the kingly Jesus and asks for healing but also wholeness. He wants to see, but he also wants to see what Jesus is bringing to the world. He has some insight about that already.

Bartimaeus’ persistence in calling out and his demand to be seen and heard, along with his lack of concern for his cloak, suggests that he knew what was important and what was not.

He shed the cloak that was weighing him down and *sprang up*.

He knew that he was ready to follow Jesus in faith without the weighty things of life.

We often think of blindness as being unable to see but Bartimaeus could see what he needed to see. His faith had given him insight into the person of Jesus. He didn’t walk away once his

30th Sunday in Ordinary Time

needs were met but instead, walked with Jesus.

We all begin with need. What we do after that need is met determines our faith life.

We all walk with a sizable crowd and it is up to us to decide if our crowd is a crowd that is leading us into a relationship with Jesus or if it is blocking us from a life of deeper faith and discipleship.

What cloak can we shed to free the spirit and strengthen our vision?

Whatever it is, Today's Gospel calls us to throw it off, open our eyes and simplify our life, leaving behind the things that weigh us down.

Not everyone is called to the life of someone like St. Francis, but there is much freedom to be gained by simplifying. Belongings and even expectations can drain us without us even realizing it.

The next time you have the thought of getting rid of something, rather than fret over it, try erring on the side of getting rid of it. The experience can be liberating and leaves space for more prayer and action that leads to growth and life-giving sustainable faith.