

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time
October 29, 2006
Fr. Larry Richards

Good Morning! The gospel, of course is one of those great gospels – famous gospel about the healing of the blind man. They even name him – Bartimaeus. And again, I was looking for different homily helps throughout the week – well, yesterday, because nothing was coming to me – and I was reading and I’m thinking “holy cow...” because everybody wants to approach this from a theoretical, spiritual, theological avenue. “Well, he was really set free from the inner-darkness and he could see Jesus as he was...” And every single line I said “oh.....forget it!” So, I said “Lord, you have to sit there with this...what is this in this reading?” It came to three things. First - perseverance. Second – no fear. Third – faith. So, let’s deal with each of those things. Perseverance. Here is poor Bartimaeus. He knows that Jesus is coming, and he starts crying out “Jesus, son of David, have pity on me.” He cries out to Jesus! And what do the people tell him? Shut up! Be quiet. Don’t bother Jesus, huh? And does he keep his mouth shut? NO! He doesn’t care! He keeps screaming “Jesus, son of David, have pity on me.” And he keeps reaching out and he keeps persevering in prayer! And so often, we give up and we don’t get what we need because we give up in our prayer. Even me – I’m looking at my own life throughout the years, you know certain things I have been praying for - for over 25 years – 25 years! And I still haven’t got it! And I’m thinking “hmm...maybe God just doesn’t want me to have it!” No, maybe God wants me to persevere more! Think about how long Monica had to pray for her son Augustine – over 30 years! And her perseverance made a saint out of her son! Right up here – the one that looks like he has leprosy because he is falling apart! But it was because of a mother’s prayer that Augustine – who is over there and up there in that window with the heart on flame with God – “Late have I loved you, oh Lord – Late have I loved you” – came from the perseverance of a mother who never stopped praying for her son. And so, the first thing that God is telling us today is that we need to be people in our prayer who persevere and persevere and persevere – even if it has been years! Don’t give up hope! You know, that priest I went to retreat to – Fr. Gene Fulton up in Larchmont, New York – he says “the greatest sin I believe priests have is – and I believe a lot of people have – is the lack of hope – that God can set them free from all of the things that they have struggled with.” We lose hope and we stop persevering in prayer. So the first thing we have to do is persevere – no matter what it is – we keep going at it. The second thing we have to do is when – when Jesus says “call him...” and they call him and they say “he is calling you...” the scripture you heard today “have courage, get up, Jesus is calling you.” A couple of years ago, the same passage said it differently – even though the translation is different today – and we all know how much I love this translation. But the translation that used to be says “do not be afraid – get up – Jesus is calling you.” So Jesus, in our prayer is always calling us in our prayer. You do realize – you don’t decide to pray. God is waiting for you and calling you – He initiates it, huh? He is calling you and me to pray. And what we have to do is not be afraid when we come into His presence. Again, this past week I was in Peoria, Illinois and you know, in dealing with different people....you know, one person said “Father, it’s hard to pray every day.” And you know - I don’t buy it! I don’t buy it! It isn’t hard to pray every day if you are in love. If you are not in love, it is a burden. If you are not in love, its “oh, I

have to go to church today...oh, I have to pray....oh, I have to do a holy hour...oh, I hate that priest that makes us do holy hours.” If you are not in love, then it is a burden! If you are in love, then you have nothing to be afraid of. You want to be with Him who loves you. And then, get what He says to us – the same thing He said to Bartimaeus is the same thing He says to us – “what do you want me to do for you?” You know, do you imagine, every time you walk into the Blessed Sacrament or every time you go to church – there is the king of kings – the lord of lords on His throne – He is sitting there before you. And then sometimes we ignore Him – which blows my mind. You know we genuflect, we don’t genuflect – we ignore Him, we read the bulletin, we talk to the people around us, blah, blah, blah...And there is the God of the Universe, looking at you, looking at me – saying “what can I do for you?” “Uh...Uh...” “What can I do for you?” He asks you that every time you come into His presence. And sometimes, we are afraid to give Him what He can do for us, so we don’t bring it to the Lord. You know, it could be a struggle, it could be a sin, it could be something you hate yourself for. It could be something that you struggle with every day – whatever it is! And He says “what can I do for you?” And you and I need to take that thing – whatever it is that we struggle with – and give it to Him. “Lord, this is what I want. Would you set me free from this sin? Jesus, would you give me courage? Jesus, would you help me with my family? Jesus...” whatever it is. “I have a problem with sexuality. Jesus, help me!” Whatever it is! Don’t be afraid to give it to the Lord – He already knows it! There is nothing that you are going to tell God that He doesn’t already know! So, don’t be afraid – give it to Him! “What can I do for you?” And then, finally, Bartimaeus looks at Him and says “Lord, I want to see.” And He believed that Jesus Christ – this man that was walking by – had the power to make him see. Again, I think in our own life we’ve lost that hope or we’ve lost that faith – that God can do anything. And you know, again when I do a Parish Mission – the last night I always say to the people “now on Wednesday, in this very church – there are going to be miracles.” And you know, the people – they turn it right off – “there’s a miracle, yea, right...” And I believe that even people who go to church – nobody here – but other places – don’t believe in God and His power. They believe there is a God up there – “oh, yea there is a God up there – we wouldn’t be here if there wasn’t a God up there.” But we don’t believe in a God of power that can perform miracles! I mean, we have to believe that – here is this man that couldn’t see his whole life – probably – and he believed that this Jesus – the God of the Universe – had the power to heal him! And Jesus did! The reason that most people don’t experience miracles in their life today is because they don’t believe in them. And if you don’t believe – you are right. God can’t do a miracle in your life because of your lack of faith. So, somewhere – if you and I come before God today and we think in my heart of hearts I don’t believe, then we have to ask God for that gift of faith. “Lord, help me to believe that you can do anything.” Then make those acts of faith. So, today, the story of Bartimaeus – what’s it mean for us? It means we have to persevere in prayer. We have to not be afraid of Christ. And we have to believe that God can do anything. Do you believe it? That He can do anything in your life? Because everything depends on that. May each of you know His love today and forever. Amen.