

Homily for the 30th Sunday in Ordinary Time

October 27-28, 2018

Readings: Jeremiah 31:7-9; Hebrews 5:1-6; Mark 10: 46-52

Preacher: Deni Mack

If we could step back in time 2000 years we'd taste the dust of Jericho as the crowds passed. We'd pull our cloak over our head and hold it close to keep out the dust and the cool air and billow it over us to protect us from sun; we'd sleep in our cloak.

If I were blind I might keep my cloak around me as I struggled to stand and trust these new helpers to lead me to Jesus. I am not physically blind but I *do need Jesus to help me see what God wants me to see and to trust God's help.*

Jesus asks us each the same question he asked Bartimaeus, "What do you want me to do for you?" How do we respond? Do we want healing for our daughter, our son? Do we want a cure for cancer? Food, safety and pure water for the children of Syria, Yemen, the Sudan? So many wants. Jesus was alert to Blind Bartimaeus's need and baptizes us to not only see the needs of people but to share in Jesus' healing, sight giving response.

What does God want us to see? People in need! People struggling to make the best of each difficult situation! Truth! Reality! Moral compass! Good news! JJ! JJ was honored by the mayor as most improved student while he and his dad lived at Assumption with our RAIHN homeless family network. To see JJ's dad gaze at his achieving son in wonder, awe, love, hope was to be blessed by a godly vision. We all saw it. We saw it in the face of the shocking reality, reported a year ago in the Democrat and Chronicle, that the number of homeless children in the Rochester City School District is up 46 percent since 2011.

Does God want us to see Joey and his mom with nothing in their refrigerator? They live one mile from my home. Joey's mom, Cathy, is cognitively impaired, and while she is not blind she could not really see what her son needs. She could not fill out the forms an agency required or even answer their questions. A trauma informed advocate sees what Cathy

and Joey need and provides patient presence to see them through the long ordeal to find a little support. A Stephen minister accompanies Cathy; their life is transformed.

For eye openers, Google Reality Tour, Rochester, N.Y., and sign up for a tour. When we went we talked with veterans and were shocked to hear there had been children trying to sleep in the abandoned subway “bed.” We met with Erica and Melissa and other social workers who cannot address the needs of the 500 to 600 people in their case load. Before welfare reform they served 60 cases. An inner city teacher said that in his class only one child is receiving assistance when he knows almost all need it. Years ago, I taught Andy who came to school so hungry, he could not think.

Yes, we see suffering. We also see hope. We see teachers and social workers who go the extra mile for students in classrooms, after school programs, sports, counseling, advocating, guiding, encouraging, tutoring and mentoring. Like the followers of Jesus in today’s Gospel who said to blind Bartimaeus, “You have nothing to fear from him; get up, Jesus is calling you.” OK, maybe they are not saying the Jesus-is-calling-you-part, but they are saying “take courage, get up” by their every empowering word and gesture.

A middle-aged teacher prays for his students every night. Retired men and women are teacher aides in city schools. A young teacher prays for his class before the students enter the classroom. The founder of family centered therapy encouraged home visits. Had I not made a home visit I would never have *seen* that Joey had no food or that Louise had no refrigerator or table or chair. It is not enough to see reality. God not only gives us the ability to see it, God gives us the ability to do something about it. God wants the same for every child that I want for our 11 grandchildren. God spoke thru the prophet Jeremiah promising to console them, to guide them and to lead them. God promises to deliver the blind, the lame, mothers and those with child. God does all that through you and me. We can ask to see; we can ask to have a vision of what can be for all people; we can cut through the riptide of poverty and hunger that breed violence. We can see!

