

Well, today's Gospel is full of details, which is somewhat unusual for Mark. He's not usually so descriptive. So, today we're going to have a pop quiz! Are you ready? So, from today's gospel - is the statement true or false?

- The father of the blind man in today's gospel was called Timaeus.
  - True - Actually, "Bar" in Hebrew means "son of". It's interesting to note that of all the people Jesus cures in the Gospels, Bartimaeus is the only one named. Timaeus comes from the Greek meaning "to honor". So, Bartimaeus is the "son of honor". Our question then might be, "How is he a 'son of honor?'"

OK, next – true or false?

- There was a crowd traveling with Jesus and some in the crowd tried to silence the blind man, but others encouraged him.
  - True – We heard "Jesus left Jericho, with his disciples and a great crowd." Now, the folks in this crowd may have been followers of Jesus, or they might have just been other pilgrims going to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover. So, it's possible that people were discussing Jesus as they walked along with Him, and Bartimaeus heard and began to call out, "Jesus, son of David, have pity on me." Apparently, he had already heard about and had faith that Jesus was the Messiah.

But, the crowd tells him to be quiet. And we heard, “Jesus stopped and said, ‘Call him.’ So, they called the blind man, saying to him, ‘Take courage; get up, Jesus is calling you.’”

- So maybe a question for us today is, “What part of the crowd are we in? Are we among those who spread the word about Jesus, or do we stand in the way of others encountering Jesus? Hopefully, we are part of the crowd that offers courage to people, that offers the Good News that God loves them.

OK, so, true or false?

- The blind man left his cloak behind as he went to Jesus.
  - True, we heard, “He threw aside his cloak, sprang up, and came to Jesus.” So, what’s the big deal? Well, his cloak was possibly all a blind beggar owned. It kept him warm. It may have been his only bed at night. He would have spread it in front of him to collect the coins as he begged. It was important! He left everything behind to go to Jesus! (Remember the rich young man a few weeks ago?)
  - Maybe our question today might be, “What is the cloak that we wrap ourselves in? What is the cloak that we find difficult to let go? What is the cloak that prevents us from freely following Jesus?”

Last one, true or false?

- When told "Go your way; your faith has saved you." the Bartimaeus went away.
  - False/True -OK, it's sort of a trick question. Bartimaeus did leave the side of the road, so he did "go away", but he did it to follow Jesus. He made Jesus' way – his way. So just maybe, Bartimaeus was a known person in the early Christian community, that is why his name is remembered, and he is a "son of honor"!
  - So, maybe the question for us is "How do we make Jesus' way our way?"

OK, I'll admit that when it comes to homilies I tend to take a three-question approach: "What?" - "So, what?" - and – "What now?" We've covered the first two, so "What now?" Well, in a few weeks we will have the United Catholic Appeal intention weekend, and I'm going to ask that, between now and then, we consider a few things in light of the story of Bartimaeus.

First, what does the United Catholic Appeal actually do? Well, it provides for those on the side of the road like Bartimaeus. Every day people turn to our local Catholic Church for the same love and mercy Jesus showed to Bartimaeus and He now calls us to give to those in need.

In our archdiocese, we feed the hungry, give shelter to the homeless and support unwed mothers in their decision to give the gift of life.

It supports Catholic Education. Our Catholic schools educate minds and form hearts and can transform lives. As students are taught to see Christ in themselves and in others.

The United Catholic Appeal supports the training of priests and deacons. It supports our young men at Simon Brute College Seminary as well as our seminarians at Saint Meinrad. It also supports the archdiocese deacon formation program. (And, when wearing my other hat, I am the director of deacon formation for the archdiocese.)

OK, you could read most of that in the information you'll be receiving in the mail this week. So, let me share a few things with you. I have worked for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis for my entire adult life. (Actually, the first paycheck I ever received from the Church was as an undergraduate working as a summer custodian at Ritter High School - 45 years ago.) I've been a teacher and an elementary school principal. I've overseen faith formation and sacramental preparation programs. I've worked with RCIA, prepared parents for their children's baptism and young couples for marriage. And most of that was before I was ordained ten years ago. I believe in Catholic education. I've seen what it can do.

In that time, I have been blessed to work with those who did not have enough. I have had the blessing to help feed those who were hungry, help keep the heat, lights, and water on for those who were in need. I have known the blessing of visiting the sick, the lonely, the imprisoned. I believe in the charitable works of Holy Mother Church.

And, I have been blessed to benefit from the support of the archdiocese as I spent five years in deacon formation preparing for ordination. In those years I was teaching, supporting a family, and had children in Catholic schools and college. I could not have afforded the cost of the classes I was taking to prepare for ordination. And, I have been blessed with the guidance and friendship of many good priests whose seminary education was also provided by the archdiocese. And, I will add that many of our priests who have reached retirement age need our support. This is also a part of the United Catholic Appeal.

So, as we approach intention weekend let's consider, "What part of the crowd are we in? Are we among those who spread the word about Jesus? Are we part of the crowd that offers courage to people, offers the Good News that God loves them? "What is the cloak that we wrap ourselves in? What is the cloak that we find difficult to let go? What is the cloak that prevents us from freely following Jesus?

Maybe the biggest question for us is "How do we make Jesus' way our way?"