

Thirtieth Sunday In Ordinary Time

My brothers and sisters, why does St. Mark give so much attention in this gospel to the Blind Man leaving his cloak behind? He tells us: “(he) threw his cloak aside...” What is the meaning of this seemingly insignificant detail?

In ancient Palestine, the cloak had very special significance: it was heavy and thickly woven, and it was the most versatile piece of clothing. It was protection against cold and heat, and blocked the fierce winds that occurred in the area. It also doubled as a blanket at night, especially for the poor, like Bartimaeus- the Blind Beggar. The cloak was a symbol of self-sufficiency, a symbol that we are capable of solving all problems in life and in our lives on our own. It symbolizes all that we depend on for happiness and security. It also covered-up the “nakedness” of the individual, (remember the young man in the Garden of Gethsemane who ran away naked, leaving his cloak behind.)

There is a saying in Portuguese: *Se você continuar procurando sob mesmo uma pedra bonita, encontrará sempre terra, ou até mesmo um escorpião ou uma serpente.* If you continue to look under even beautiful rocks, you will always find dirt and maybe a scorpion or a snake! If you look under that tough cloak and beautifully woven cloak, you will find a naked person. The tragic philosopher Nietzsche, the father of Nazism said: “if one stares at evil long enough it looks back.” Nietzsche preferred looking at the darkness. Fr. Clark says: “if you stare at the darkness, the darkness is all you will see.” Keep your eyes focused upon Jesus, the Light!

The blind beggar had to leave his cloak behind: his ego, his way of thinking about himself and the world, his pre-occupation with himself, in order to receive his true vision through Christ; and so must we! Under the beautiful rock, there is always dirt, and sometimes much worse! Look to Jesus Christ, don't look upon your own self-sufficient ways of thinking, because you are not self-sufficient. Christ is the only remedy for our blindness, He alone can restore our true vision! I am not capable of saving myself, nor the world, He alone can do this!

There are many stories of little children with impaired vision putting on glasses for the first time, or of adults who were blind, who had surgery to repair a defect of their vision. In many cases, their faces go from confusion, to great joy; however, in some cases, (of adults who had their vision restored), they would cover their eyes because they preferred the way they were used to living in the world. It is not an accident that Jesus calls Himself the light of the World; don't stare at the darkness, rather, keep your eyes focused upon Jesus Christ, the light! Don't continually seek the beautiful rocks, underneath you will always find dirt. As St. Teresa d'Ávila said: "Let nothing disturb you, let nothing frighten you, All things pass away: God never changes. Patience obtains all things. He who has God, finds he lacks nothing. God alone suffices." We are all just blind beggars, look to Jesus, He alone suffices!