

Homily for the Opening Eucharist of the National Registrars' Conference

18 November 2019

Luke 18:35-43 *Jesus Heals the Blind Man*

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The Three Musicians. Pablo Picasso

The encounter with the blind man in today's Gospel from Luke occurs during Jesus' journey to Jerusalem (9:51-19:27). This journey narrative in Luke has three sections (9:51-13:21; 13:22-17:10; 17:11-19:27), each commencing with a verse explicitly mentioning that Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem. In this narrative, Jesus is the supreme teacher of the disciples and others in what it means to be one of his followers.

Jericho was on the pilgrimage route from Galilee to Jerusalem. Jesus and the disciples join what was probably a large group of pilgrims on their way up to Jerusalem for the Passover.

Names are important: sometimes because they're mentioned and sometimes because they're not.

The blind man here is unnamed. In Mark's version of this encounter (Mark 10:46-52) the blind man is named: Bartimaeus. Bartimaeus of Jericho.

Jesus' title is also worthy of note: the man addresses Jesus as "Son of David". This is one of the very few occasions in the Gospels when Jesus is addressed by this title.

JB Caird points out that it's unlikely that this represented the blind man's own private conviction, but rather what others had been saying about Jesus. Important, because it was echoed a few days later when Jesus entered Jerusalem, hailed as a king.

His words to Jesus are "Lord, let me see again"

As Registrars I know you deal with a variety of complex issues every day.

Much of the time we are controlled and driven by multiple responsibilities and tasks of our daily routine, that we are not aware of how limited / unclear our seeing is.

Often in life the way we view things is too narrow, but I suspect in your case it's hard to see clearly due to the complexity of the situations: there's the legal/canonical aspect, the financial implications, the pastoral aspects, then there's what's practical/expedient, then there's what the Bishop wants!

Last century the Cubist painters attempted to paint what an object might look like if it was seen simultaneously from different angles: like Picasso's Three Musicians illustrated above. These are incredibly valuable on the market but let's face it ...

Seeing a complex issue from every angle at the same time looks pretty odd!

Yet aspects that might disappoint, frighten or sadden us from one angle, might have a different feel when viewed from another angle. A solution from one angle just cannot be conceived, but a solution from another perspective could be just the thing.

But it has to be based on more than just what's going to work. Wisdom is needed to see God's will amongst the complexity.

Br David Steindl – Rast says that “Action without vision is mere activism, just running in circles”. Action based on a clear vision of who Jesus is for us, personally and as a church, is mission.

Jesus says to the blind man, “Receive your sight; your faith has made you well”

You and I might not have a diagnosable visual impairment like Bartimaeus but we still need Jesus to help us with our sight, our vision, so that we can see clearly.

May our words to Jesus be those of Bartimaeus: “Lord, let me see again”

Spiritual Sight (from Colqohoun's Parish Prayers, adapted)

Almighty Father, whose blessed Son restored sight to the blind man who sought his mercy: Clear away, we beseech thee, the blindness of our hearts, and enlighten our minds with your heavenly truth, that we may enjoy your love and spiritual understanding; through the same our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.