

Reflections on the Readings for World Youth Day October 25, 2009— Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle B

First Reading: Jeremiah 31:7-9

Thus says the LORD:

Shout with joy for Jacob,
exult at the head of the nations;
proclaim your praise and say:

The LORD has delivered his people,
the remnant of Israel.

Behold, I will bring them back
from the land of the north;

I will gather them from the ends of the world,
with the blind and the lame in their midst,
the mothers and those with child;
they shall return as an immense throng.

They departed in tears,
but I will console them and guide them;
I will lead them to brooks of water,
on a level road, so that none shall stumble.
For I am father to Israel,
Ephraim is my first-born.

Commentary

Jeremiah was known more for his words of doom and gloom than for those of hope and reassurance because his role was to get Judah “back on track” with God and God’s ways. But by the time this excerpt was written, Judah was being taken over by the Babylonians and Jeremiah knew that God’s people needed to hear a different message. This later, more hope-filled message was one that portrayed the joy and exultation that will come when God’s people return home to their land and to their God, a God who has never left them alone, even when they were at their lowest. It also helped point out that God does not delight in our undoing and suffering, but longs for reunion and reconciliation with his people.



Questions for Reflection

- Have you ever been lost or taken a wrong turn and found yourself somewhere you did not want to be? What was that experience like for you? What if that had lasted many years—how would the idea of “coming home” or “getting back on track” impact you?
- How are young people today lost or led off course in their search for a faith identity?

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 126:1-6

Response: The Lord has done great things for us;
we are filled with joy.

When the LORD brought back the captives of Zion,
we were like men dreaming.

Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
and our tongue with rejoicing.

Response

Then they said among the nations,
“The LORD has done great things for them.”
The LORD has done great things for us;
we are glad indeed.

Response

Restore our fortunes, O LORD,
like the torrents in the southern desert.
Those that sow in tears
shall reap rejoicing.

Response

Although they go forth weeping,
carrying the seed to be sown,
They shall come back rejoicing,
carrying their sheaves.

Response

Commentary

This psalm invites the congregation to rejoice and acknowledge the joy that comes with restoration. The psalmist is giving praise to God for liberating God's people from exile. In the verses, we experience the complete turn of emotion from "weeping" to "rejoicing." God is good indeed, worthy to be praised.

Questions for Reflection

- Have you ever experienced going from "zero" to "hero" or from the bottom to the top? How did that experience of unexpected joy impact your life?
- How is the church called to help lift up and rejoice in the gifts and talents of its young people? How might that impact the faith identity of teens?

Second Reading: Hebrews 5:1-6

Brothers and sisters:

Every high priest is taken from among men
and made their representative before God,
to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.
He is able to deal patiently with the ignorant and
erring,
for he himself is beset by weakness
and so, for this reason, must make sin offerings
for himself
as well as for the people.

No one takes this honor upon himself
but only when called by God,
just as Aaron was.

In the same way,
it was not Christ, who glorified himself in
becoming high priest,
but rather the one who said to him:
*You are my son;
this day I have begotten you;*
just as he says in another place:
*You are a priest forever
according to the order of Melchizedek.*

Commentary

Melchizedek was the priest-king who met and blessed Abraham in chapter 14 of Genesis. Why is this important? Because the author of Hebrews is trying to let his audience know that Jesus'

priesthood came from God long before the role of priesthood was given to the children of Aaron (Moses' brother). Jesus' "ordination" came from the top, which is why the second psalm is quoted within this reading, saying "you are my son; this day I have begotten you."

Additionally, unlike other priests, Jesus was not required to make sacrifices for his own sins (since he was without sin), which enabled him to offer up his total self for the sins of the entire world. Only one without sin could have accomplished such a feat. This reading is an important connection to the Gospel reading that is about to be proclaimed because it offers insight into why Jesus had both the authority and the responsibility to heal the blind man—it was his mission, he had no other choice as God's appointed high priest.

Questions for Reflection

- The second reading speaks of Jesus "standing above the crowd" when compared to other high priests. Who do you know that "stands above the crowd" when compared to others in the world? At home? At school?
- Think of a young person who "stands above the crowd" in terms of their faith and beliefs. What characteristics and values make this person special? How might the church help all young people to "stand above the crowd?"

Gospel: Mark 10:46-52

As Jesus was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a sizeable crowd,

Bartimaeus, a blind man, the son of Timaeus,
sat by the roadside begging.

On hearing that it was Jesus of Nazareth,
he began to cry out and say,
"Jesus, son of David, have pity on me."

And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent.

But he kept calling out all the more,
"Son of David, have pity on me."

Jesus stopped and said, "Call him."

So they called the blind man, saying to him,

"Take courage; get up, Jesus is calling you."

He threw aside his cloak, sprang up,
and came to Jesus.

Jesus said to him in reply, “What do you want me to do for you?”

The blind man replied to him, “Master, I want to see.”

Jesus told him, “Go your way; your faith has saved you.”

Immediately he received his sight and followed him on the way.

Commentary

Have you ever wanted something so badly that you did not care what others thought about you or how you acted? Bartimaeus was definitely that type of person.

What did he have to lose? He was already at the bottom of the social and economic rung of society—a blind beggar (remember that people used to think that those with physical or psychological ailments were that way due to either their own sin or their parent’s sins). In short, Bartimaeus did not have far to fall if he embarrassed himself or embarrassed Jesus. Perhaps that is the reason that Jesus was often found with or near those most in need—the blind, the lame, the sinners, and the poor. These were the people who could let go and look at Jesus through eyes of faith, which is exactly what Bartimaeus did.



In this brief encounter between Jesus and Bartimaeus, the reader is fully initiated into the five-step process of disciple making:

1. Name Jesus as your master and Lord
2. Trust totally in him
3. Move actively toward God
4. Experience the healing that this movement brings about
5. Follow in Jesus’ footsteps

By taking these steps of faith, Bartimaeus is healed and made whole again, which is certainly cause for celebration. With his sight restored and fixed on Jesus, he was an ideal candidate to bring the good news of forgiveness, liberation, and welcome to others he undoubtedly would meet along the road he was now travelling, thanks to Jesus.

Questions for Reflection

- Bartimaeus lived each day pretty much the same, doing what he always did until he met up with Jesus and was transformed. How has Jesus transformed how you live your life?
- In what ways might young people still be blind to Jesus in their midst? What can the church do to help open the eyes of teens to the type of lifestyle and service into which Jesus invites each of us?
- How might young people open the eyes of the church to the needs, gifts, and leadership that teens bring to the community?

Commentary notes and readings referenced in part from Workbook for Lectors and Gospel Readers (Rev. NAB—Year B) by Susan E. Myers, Archdiocese of Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications: Chicago.