

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, October 28, 2018

The Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

This email, entitled Looking to Sunday®, focuses on one or more of the scripture readings for the coming Sunday. It prepares readers to hear God's Word at Mass and it offers a point of reflection to consider in the days leading to Sunday. Looking to Sunday is written by Father Tom Iwanowski.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

If you were to read a newspaper report about someone winning an election for City Council, you would expect the article to include the name of the person who won the election.

It would be odd to read a story that simply said, "a man was elected" or "a woman was chosen."

We expect the names of people to appear in stories.

In the Gospel there are many reports about Jesus opening the eyes of the blind, restoring hearing to the deaf, curing people of leprosy, healing the paralyzed, and driving out demons from those possessed. But we are not told the names of those cured by Jesus.

We do not know the names of the ten lepers who were made clean. Nor are we given the name of the paralytic whom Jesus healed after his friends let him down through the roof. We do not know the name of the woman whose flow of blood stopped when she touched Jesus. We have no idea of the name of the man whose ears were opened and whose tongue was loosened.

We know the names of only two people cured of physical problems by Jesus.

We know the name of the slave of the high priest who was healed by Jesus after his ear was severed by Peter when Jesus was arrested. In his Gospel John tells us, "The slave's name was Malchus." (John 18:10)

We also know the name of the blind man who is given sight in this Sunday's Gospel (Mark 10:46-52). Mark tells us his name was "Bartimaeus...the son of Timaeus." That name does not appear in the other Gospels.

Perhaps Mark mentions his name because Bartimaeus was well known among the Christians for whom Mark was writing his Gospel. Or perhaps, Bartimaeus had become a recognized leader in the Christian community.

However, there may be another reason why the cured man's name was recorded.

Plato, the famous Greek philosopher of the fourth century BC, had written a dialogue called the *Timaeus*. In this philosophical work a character named Timaeus presents his understanding of the physical world and of human persons.

The name Bartimaeus may indicate not only a literal son of Timaeus, but also a person who embraced a Greek inspired understanding of life. A person who was a "son" of the Timaeus of Plato, a "Bartimaeus."

In relating the cure of the blind Bartimaeus, Mark may be indicating that not only were the man's eyes opened, but the man's view of existence was opened as well. He came to see Jesus as the one who proclaimed the true understanding of the meaning and purpose of life.

Bartimaeus, the former "son" of "Timaeus" now began to follow Jesus "on the way." A term not only indicating a road, but a term used for followers of Jesus. They were people of the Way. (Acts 9:2)

Like Bartimaeus, we have been touched by the Lord and blessed with the gift of faith. We know that the true understanding of the meaning and purpose of life is found not in any philosophy but in a relationship with Jesus Christ, "the way, the truth and the life."

By including the name of Bartimaeus, Mark may be telling us not only about a person gaining sight, but a person gaining insight as well. Sometimes there is more to a name than we might imagine.

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