

Homily for people and parishes

Bishop Cam Venables – Sunday, 27th October 2024, Pentecost 23

Readings: Job 42:1-6, 10-17
Hebrews 7:21-28

Psalm 34:1-8 (19-22)
Mark 10: 46-52

I was at Bunnings last week trying to find some galvanised steel plates for a project. Another customer pulled up alongside and said, ‘How are you going?’ and even though I recognised her, I could not remember her name! I knew which town she came from, what the name of her husband was, as well as the names of friends that we have in common... but her name eluded me. We had a good catch up – and, as soon as I made it into the next aisle, I looked up her husband’s name – found hers – and went back to get something I’d forgotten... only this time, I was able to call her by name!

I don’t like forgetting names, because when we greet someone by name, or they call ours, I think it makes a world of difference to the conversation. We have some sort of relationship established and we’re working from that understanding.

When reading the New Testament, we often find in Gospel stories women and men who are not named. Remember the man who had leprosy that Jesus healed; the Samaritan woman who shared a conversation with Jesus beside a well; the crippled man lowered by his friends through a hole in the roof; and the Syrophenician woman who asked that her daughter be healed. In each encounter the Gospel writers do not name these people.

However, in this week’s Gospel we hear about someone who had need of healing, and we are told his name. More than this, we are also given the name of his father. The man was called Bartimaeus, and he was the son of Timaeus. So, blind Bartimaeus was acknowledged as the son of someone before we are told about his poverty and disability.

Mark tells us that Bartimaeus was a beggar, and that he was blind and because of the naming, relational questions can be evoked, like, ‘How did Bartimaeus become blind?’ ‘What age was he when that happened?’ and, ‘How did Timaeus feel about his son’s disability, and his need to beg?’

However, Bartimaeus was a blind beggar who longed to see again. He called out to Jesus as he went by, and because of his persistence Bartimaeus was brought to him. Jesus asked, ‘What do you want?’ and with great clarity, Bartimaeus replied, ‘I want see again!’. In God’s grace, this desire was granted, and Bartimaeus had his sight restored.

Imagine Jesus asking that same question of us – ‘What do you want?’ How would you answer? How would I answer? So that we don’t tangle ourselves up in knots I invite each of us to think about the question in three ways: What do you want... **for yourself?** What

do you want... **for a person that you know?** And, What do you want... **for a community, or country, which has need?**

Let me offer my response to these three questions to prime the pump for your own responses:

- *For myself...* I ask for greater wisdom in the way that I manage all that I have been given responsibility for.
- *For others...* I pray for God's blessing on all who journey with any form of mental illness – particularly depression and anxiety.
- *And, for a community, or country...* I pray for God's blessing on each Parish in the West that does not have the financial capacity to pay for a full-time or part-time priest. I pray that God bless and encourage the lay leaders of those parishes as they lead worship each week, ensure that people are cared for, pay the bills, and maintain the buildings. More widely, in Queensland I pray for God's blessing on all elected to lead and serve in State Government this weekend

Globally, I pray for God's blessing of peace within each country experiencing terrible conflict. In this, I think particularly of the need for peace in Israel, Gaza, Lebanon, Yemen, Iran, Ukraine, Russia, Sudan, and South Sudan. I pray for God's blessing of wisdom and compassion on all levels of leadership, and a valuing of all human life not just those who have a particular religious or political belief.

I pray also for God's blessing on the US election and for leadership in that country that will be wise.

What about you?

- What do you want... for yourself?
- What do you want... for a person that you know?
- and, What do you want... for a community, or a country, which has need?

I'd love to hear your thoughts, and hope the questions help bring focus to your prayers and your discussion with others.

For now – would you please join me in prayer:

Holy God, we give thanks for the gift of our lives, and your love. Thank you for enabling the eyes of Bartimaeus to see again, and for the ways you continue to bring new life and hope to the world. Give us the courage to think deeply about what we want for ourselves, and for others... and may your Spirit guide our thinking. We pray in the name of Jesus, the healer. Amen.