

“Proclaim your praise and say: The LORD has delivered his people! Behold, I will bring them back... I will gather them from the ends of the world.” Words from our first reading from the 31st chapter of the prophet Jeremiah – Sisters and brothers, may the Lord give to you his peace and his joy.

Growing up, we put many things into our backpacks for school each and every day, including our lunches, our school supplies, our gym clothes, any projects we were working on, and, most notably, our heavy New York State Textbooks for Math, Science, English, and History. How all that weight didn't topple us kids over, I'll never know. Well, after a year of good hard use, the \$25 backpacks from Kmart began to wear out and tear at the seams. Now, most families, I imagined at the time, would simply purchase new book-bags along with the other required materials for the new school year. However, Dad and Mom were thrifty people, and I can recall vividly sitting on the couch downstairs in our basement, with a heavy-duty needle that must have been grandpa's at one point, and a spool of fishing line from our poles, attempting to sew and repair my book-bag so that it would be ready for another school year. As I look back on the little extra work that I had to do while my fellow classmates got off scot-free, I realize that Dad was trying to teach me several good lessons that would prove valuable in life: the value of money – it doesn't grow on trees; how to sew – while I'm not great at sewing, this practical skill has come in more handy than one might realize; and how to truly appreciate and care for the things that you have – indeed unless you invest in something, it becomes easy to take for granted and throw away. It also turns out that with the fishing line on the seams, my backpack was stronger than ever before. Mom and Dad thought it worth restoring, and now I couldn't agree with them more.

Some things, we know, are simply worth restoring. We hire artists to restore old masterpieces and paintings so they aren't lost to time. We restore historic buildings and sites so they don't fall into disrepair and can appreciate our past. Going downtown and seeing all the people hanging out around the waterfront, you can see inklings of how the restoration of the city of Buffalo has brought new life to our community in Western New York. On a family level, it might be worth restoring something like the Sunday dinner around the family dining table or board game night, so that we can be intentional about our family relationships and take a pause from our fast-paced, overwhelming lifestyles. Maybe some of the relationships we are in with our friends or our spouse even could use some healing and restoration. I suppose we could easily obtain new things, commission new projects, and find new friends, but if we aren't careful, we may end up throwing away some of our opportunities and losing some of our treasures.

[Our Church is also one of those treasures we have. I don't want to spend much time speaking on the abuse crisis because it's a painful topic, and I know it's one that weighs heavily on all our hearts and minds. But the Church has been good to me, as it has been to most of us over

the course of our lives. One of the reasons I became a priest is because I wanted to be a part of that and pass along this treasure to others. I don't love the Church because she's perfect; I don't look up to my fellow priests because they are faultless - the letter to the Hebrews today acknowledges this about the weaknesses of priests. But I do see that the Church follows in the priesthood of Jesus Christ in spite of these things, and so can offer worship, sacraments, grace, and forgiveness that you can't find anywhere else. In this respect, it is certainly worth committing to the restoration of the Church as painstaking a process as restoration can be.]

Indeed, our readings today are about restoration. In our Gospel, the blind man Bartimaeus sought restoration. He was no longer accepted by society along with all the others who were likewise blind, crippled, and lame. Like trash, these people considered to be of no use were thrown out to the curb, where they were to spend the rest of their days begging for some assistance, all the while hoping against hope for restoration. There on the roadside we find Bartimaeus, thinking to himself: "If only I could see again." All of a sudden, a sizable crowd is approaching. "Look, here comes Jesus, the promised Messiah and Son of David. Make way for him and his disciples," people shout. Something new and exciting is happening. Bartimaeus cries out to Jesus for help, but everybody around him rebuked him and told him to be quiet. The world of its own accord is not interested in restoration. Its motto is out with the old and in with the new. Yet, against the wishes of the crowd and the ways of the world, Jesus reached out to the old, bringing restoration to the blind man Bartimaeus by giving him back his sight. In the same manner, God's promise of restoration in our first reading is addressed to the nation of Israel which had been destroyed and was living in exile. The people had lost all their belongings, and they were separated from their families. In part, this was because Israel cast aside their old traditions and their way of life and their relationship with God, all of which made their nation so great. They lost their place in their world, quite literally as other nations took advantage of their situation to conquer them. Through the prophet Jeremiah God proclaims to the people of Israel that as their Father, no other children could replace them. God promises that he will restore Israel, and bring them back home.

What God reveals to us through Bartimaeus and through Israel in the readings today is that God also thinks us worth restoring, we're worth saving. We are precious to him. He doesn't leave us for something or someone else. He is committed to this relationship and in restoring it, wants to make it stronger than ever before. As we examine our own lives, we know that we've all lost something: our financial security, our health, our trust in other people, our peace... whatever it is, we all need restoring today, as individuals, as a community and nation, and as a Church. "Go your way, your faith has saved you," Jesus tells Bartimaeus. Immediately his sight was restored. May we take courage; get up, and approach Jesus who is calling us to the work of restoration in the context of our lives. May we go forth today knowing the restoration that comes from faith.

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Lectionary: 149

Reading 1 [JER 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 a father to Israel,
Ephraim is my first-born.

Responsorial Psalm [PS 126:1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 6](#)

R. (3) 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.

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

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.

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

Restore our fortunes, O LORD,
like the torrents in the southern desert.

Those that sow in tears
shall reap rejoicing.

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

Although they go forth weeping,
carrying the seed to be sown,

They shall come back rejoicing,
carrying their sheaves.

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

Reading 2 [HEB 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.

Alleluia [CF. 2 TM 1:10](#)

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Our Savior Jesus Christ destroyed death
and brought life to light through the Gospel.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel [MK 10:46-52](#)

As Jesus was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a sizable 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.