



The Holy See

CONCLUSION OF THE ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS

HOLY MASS

PAPAL CHAPEL

HOMILY OF THE HOLY FATHER FRANCIS

Saint Peter's Basilica

XXX Sunday in Ordinary Time, 27 October 2024

[Multimedia]

Today's Gospel presents us with Bartimaeus, a blind man forced to beg at the side of the road, an outcast lacking hope. Yet, when he heard Jesus passing by, he began to shout after him. All Bartimaeus could do was to cry out in pain to Jesus and express his desire that he might regain his sight. While others were troubled by his cries and rebuked him, Jesus paused. For God always hears the cry of the poor, and no cry of pain goes unheard by him.

Today, at the conclusion of the General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, with our hearts filled with gratitude for the moments we have shared, let us reflect on what happened to Bartimaeus. Initially he was "sitting by the roadside" (*Mk 10:46*), but by the end he was called by Jesus, recovered his sight and "followed him on the way" (v. 52).

The first thing that the Gospel tells us about Bartimaeus is that he was begging by the roadside. His position is typical of someone who sits by the side of a road, caught up in his own grief, as if there were nothing else to do but receive something from the many pilgrims passing through the city of Jericho as Passover drew near. Yet, as we know, if we are truly to live, we cannot remain seated. Life entails being on the move, setting out, dreaming, planning, opening up to the future. Blind Bartimaeus, then, represents that inner blindness which restrains us, keeps us stuck in one

place, holds us back from the dynamism of life and destroys our hope.

This can help us reflect not only on our own lives, but also on what it means to be the Lord's Church. So many things along the way can make us blind, incapable of perceiving the presence of the Lord, unprepared to face the challenges of reality, sometimes unable to offer adequate responses to the questions of so many who cry out to us, as Bartimaeus did to Jesus. We cannot remain inert before the questions raised by the women and men of today, before the challenges of our time, the urgency of evangelization and the many wounds that afflict humanity. Sisters and brothers, we cannot afford to sit back. A sedentary Church, that inadvertently withdraws from life and confines itself to the margins of reality, is a Church that risks remaining blind and becoming comfortable with its own unease. If we remain stuck in our blindness, we will continuously fail to grasp the urgency of giving a pastoral response to the many problems of our world. Let us ask the Lord to send us the Holy Spirit, so that we do not sit in our blindness, which in other words can be a worldliness, complacency, or closed heart. We cannot stay sitting in our blindness.

Yet, we should remember that the Lord passes by every day. The Lord always passes by and pauses in order to attend to our blindness. We should ask ourselves, "Do I hear him passing by? Do I have the capacity to hear the Lord's footsteps? Do I have the capacity to discern when the Lord is passing by?" It is good if the Synod is urging us as a Church to be like Bartimaeus: a community of disciples who, hearing that the Lord is passing by, feel the joy of salvation, allow ourselves to be awakened by the power of the Gospel, and to cry out to him. The Church does this when it takes up the cry of all the women and men of the world, of those who wish to discover the joy of the Gospel, and of those who have turned away; the silent cry of those who are indifferent; the cry of those who suffer, of the poor and marginalized, of children who are enslaved in so many parts of the world for work; the broken voice of those who no longer have the strength to cry out to God, either because they have no voice or because they are in despair. We do not need a sedentary and defeatist Church, but a Church that hears the cry of the world – I wish to say this even if some might be scandalised – a Church that gets its hands dirty in serving.

Thus, we come to the second aspect. The Gospel tells us that if initially Bartimaeus was seated, at the end we see him *following Jesus along the road*. This is a typical expression in the Gospel, meaning that he has become the Lord's disciple and has followed in his footsteps. When the beggar cried out to him, Jesus stopped and called for him. Bartimaeus, from where he was sitting, jumped up on his feet and immediately afterwards regained his sight. Now he can see the Lord; he can recognize God's action in his life and finally set out to follow him. Let us do likewise.

Whenever we are seated and settled, when as a Church we cannot find the strength, the courage or the boldness to arise and continue along the way, let us always remember to return to the Lord and his Gospel. We always need to return to the Lord and the Gospel. As he passes by again and again, we need to listen to his call so that we can get back on our feet and he can heal our blindness; and then we can follow him once more, and walk with him along the way.

I would like to reiterate that the Gospel says of Bartimaeus that he “followed him on the way”. This is an image of the synodal Church. The Lord is calling us, lifting us up when we are seated or fallen down, restoring our sight so that we can perceive the anxieties and sufferings of the world in the light of the Gospel. And when the Lord puts us back on our feet, we experience the joy of following him on the way. We follow the Lord along the way, we do not follow him enclosed in our comforts or we do not follow him in the mazes of our minds. We follow him only along the way. Let us remember never to walk alone or according to worldly criteria, but to walk on the way alongside him.

Brothers and sisters, not a seated Church, but a Church on her feet. Not a silent Church, but a Church that embraces the cry of humanity. Not a blind Church, but a Church, enlightened by Christ, that brings the light of the Gospel to others. Not a static Church, but a missionary Church that walks with her Lord through the streets of the world.

Today, as we give thanks to the Lord for the journey we have made together, we will be able to see and venerate the relic of the carefully restored ancient Chair of Saint Peter. As we contemplate it with the wonder of faith, let us remember that this is the Chair of love, unity and mercy, according to Jesus’ command to the Apostle Peter not to lord it over others, but to serve them in charity. And, as we admire the majestic Bernini Baldachin, more sublime than ever, we can rediscover that it frames the true focal point of the entire basilica, namely the glory of the Holy Spirit. This is the synodal Church: a community whose primacy lies in the gift of the Spirit, who makes us all brothers and sisters in Christ and raises us up to him.

Sisters and brothers, let us therefore continue our journey together with confidence. Today, the word of God speaks to us, as to Bartimaeus: “Take heart; get up, he is calling you”. Do I feel called? Do I feel weak and cannot get up? Do I call for help? Let us throw off the cloak of resignation; let us entrust our blindness to the Lord; let us stand once more and carry the joy of the Gospel through the streets of the world.