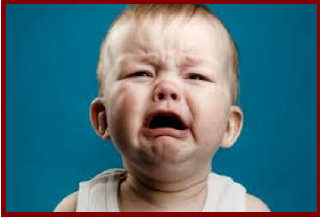


GETTING JESUS' ATTENTION **MEDITATIONS ON ST. LUKE 18:35-43**

(Gospel for the 34th Sunday after Pentecost, 24 January 2016)

By Subdeacon Dr. Joshua D. Genig

In the Name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.



You and I have all been to churches where young children who make noise are quickly carried out, so as not to disturb other worshippers. Worse still, you and I have all been to churches where mothers are given the “stink eye” when they don’t remove their children quickly enough. When it happens here, however, usually Fr Roman or Fr Daneil will look over at me and ask: “Is that yours?” Well, yes, it probably is! But that’s not the point. The point is that *that* noise is, very simply, **the noise of the Gospel**. It is the sound through which God, in His mercy, continues to call all to His Church – all to salvation – even the littlest and the loudest.

And that’s the way children work, you know. Because one gift is lacking – their words, their speech – they find all sorts of other *creative* ways to let us know what they need. They throw things, they cry, they giggle, and, yes, sometimes they even yell and scream. They will do anything – yes, anything – to get our attention.

And it is really no different for the man in today’s Gospel. When a certain gift is lacking – his sight – this blind man finds another way to get the attention of Jesus. St. Luke describes it this way: “[...] he cried out, saying, ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!’ Then those who went before warned him that he should be quiet; but he cried out all the more, ‘Son of David, have mercy on me!’” In a word, this blind man became like a child again, making all sorts of noise so that Jesus might hear him, and in hearing him, see him, and in seeing him, love him.

Now, this is the usual point in the homily where you’d hear it said: “Now, folks, we are all like that blind man. We are spiritually blind. We cannot see the things of God. And we are in need of having our spiritual sight restored.” And while that is true, I think there something much simpler here, something much more basic to the blind man’s encounter with Jesus today.

No matter what your struggle, no matter what your weakness, no matter what it is that you find lacking – maybe not eye sight or hearing or taste or touch or smell, but maybe:

- *your prayers* – maybe you struggle to say them every single day;
- *maybe your love* – maybe it has grown cold;
- *maybe your repentance* – maybe it’s hard to give up some particular sin;
- *maybe your fasting* – maybe you struggle to make a go of it;
- *or maybe your forgiveness of others* – maybe you continue to nurse old grudges and feed old wounds —
- *whatever it is, it really doesn’t matter.*

What matters is this: whatever it is that you find lacking, Jesus invites you to do the most childish, innocent thing imaginable: He invites you to cry out for his mercy! That is, after all, what this blind man asked for.

You notice he didn’t say: ‘Jesus, give me my sight again.’ No. He said: ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.’

And it is in having mercy, it is in stopping, bending down, and talking directly to that blind man, that Jesus finally asks him what it is he wishes to receive.

And that is how it is with us. It is Christ first. And so it is mercy first.

And mercy is simply the Church’s way of talking about God, in the person of His Son, coming to meet you where you are, stooping down to your level, joining you in your weakness, and entering into what is lacking.

And when He enters into our lives that way, as the One who is “all in all,” as we just heard in the Epistle, He not only forgives and heals, but He also restores and fills and makes whole again.

So, please, go ahead and act like a child again. Beg for His mercy. Say it as simply as this:

Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner.

And know that this prayer offered in faith, from a child’s heart, *will* undoubtedly make us well again.

And then be sure to do what that blind man did. You remember that the Gospel ends with the blind man following Jesus.

No, Jesus is not interested in tallying up miracles. He is interested in making disciples.

May God grant this to all of us.

In the Name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

