

By Father Charles Bowes

Jeremiah 31:7-9  
Hebrews 5:1-6  
Mark 10:46-52

## *We pray that we might see.*

The prayer of blind Bartimaeus in Mark chapter 10 is so very much our prayer: “Master, I want to see.” This is true especially as we enter the week of our national and local elections. We want to see...we pray that we might be given discernment and right judgment – that the good Lord will raise up for us leaders who will work to heal and to bring peace.

This portion of St. Mark’s gospel was written to benefit the early Christian community, which was under persecution and was struggling with its faith. In this episode, Bartimaeus, the blind man, is the one who sees – the one who calls out for Jesus to heal. And Jesus’ question of Bartimaeus is the same question Jesus asks each follower in every age: “What do you want me to do for you?”

In our bulletin today you will find a statement from our bishops entitled “Called to Faithful Citizenship.” It is well-written, worth a glance before going to the polls this week. The bishops articulate briefly and succinctly some principles of our Catholic Social Teaching...and folks, we can be proud of what we hold as Catholics. One thing the Catholic Church is not is trendy, but it is deep, with firm principles. The

Bishops make several telling statements – I’ll try to summarize a few which call each and every one of us to faithful citizenship.

The bishops begin with this impressive statement, “We do not seek the formation of a religious voting block, nor do we instruct persons on how they should vote by endorsing or opposing parties or candidates. We are convinced that a consistent ethic of life should be the moral framework from which to address all issues in the political arena. We hope that voters will examine the positions of candidates on the full range of issues as well as on their personal integrity, philosophy and performance. ...Our moral framework does not fit the categories of right or left, Democrat or Republican. Our responsibility is to measure every party and platform by how its agenda touches human life and dignity.”

The bishops go on to say how participation in the political process is a moral obligation for us Catholics. They articulate a number of principles or themes in Catholic social teaching. The first is that every person is precious. We believe all human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. The bishops point out that human life is under attack from abortion, assisted suicide and increasing use of the death penalty. Therefore, we measure every institution as to whether it protects and promotes human life.

Second is the call to family, community and participation. The bishops say that the person is not only sacred but also social. We are not islands, lone rangers. How we organize our society – in economics and politics, in law and policy – directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community. The family is the central social institution and must be supported and strengthened, not undermined. We Catholics believe people have a right and a duty to participate in society, seeking together the common good and well-being of all, especially the poor and the vulnerable.

And this leads to a third principle: Option for the poor and vulnerable. We make a choice in favor of the poor and vulnerable. A basic moral test is how our most vulnerable members are faring. In a society marred by deepening divisions between rich and poor, we recall the story of the Last Judgment in Matthew 25 – it was how the least were treated that determined those who entered the Kingdom. We are to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first.

A fourth principle: The dignity of work and the rights of workers. In other words, the economy must serve people, not the other way around. Work is more than a way of making a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God's creation. This means the rights of workers are to be respected – the right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, to organize and join unions, to private property, and to economic initiative.

Fifthly: Solidarity – we are members of one human family – we *are* our brothers' and sisters' keepers, wherever they live – not just in our neighborhoods or in our families, but worldwide.

Whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic or ideological differences, we are one human family – we are in solidarity with every human being. We are a global community now. Learning to practice the virtue of solidarity means learning that “loving our neighbor” has global dimensions in an interdependent world.

And a sixth principle: Care for God's creation. We are to be sensitive to the emerging environmental ethic as stewards of creation. Care for the earth is not just an Earth Day slogan: it is a requirement of our faith. We are to protect people and planet.

...Six principles which are the core of our Catholic social teaching. No candidate, no political party subscribes to the Catholic moral framework completely. We have tough choices this week. But we have some principles to guide us from our Catholic Social Teachings – you'll find these in today's bulletin, and these homily notes are at the doors. Use them and vote. I know I will.

What I suggest we do is together ask the great and gracious God to guide our choices as we move toward Tuesday. Again, Jesus asks us as he did blind Bartimaeus: “What do you want me to do for you?” And we in turn pray fervently: “Master, I want to see.”

Let us pray: Come to us O good and gracious God, and bestow the gift of your Spirit, the gift of wisdom. Show us, enlighten us, open our minds and hearts to the needs of life and of justice, of care for your creation and of sensitivity to all the world. Raise up wise and virtuous leaders. We ask this through Christ the Lord. Amen.

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