



The Holy Spirit Province NEWSLETTER

20 October 2021



PRAYING IN PAIN: 30TH SUNDAY B

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

Now and then we come across people about by things that happen to them. We've seen e.g., people on television in deep grief because a loved one has been murdered, or been killed in a car accident, or their house with all their belongings has just burnt to the ground. In the face of such disasters, they may sit on the ground with their heads in their hands, rocking from side to side, or they may just stare blindly ahead. In their extreme pain, they are often incapable of saying even one word about what they are feeling. So, when someone asks: 'How are you feeling?' or 'Is there anything I can do?', or 'Can I bring you a cup of tea or coffee?' there's just no answer. The victims of sudden disasters simply cannot answer anything at all. In their numb state, they are feeling just too much pain and too much shock even to hear what is being said to them.

The first step to easing their pain is for them to find a language to express it. So, we are not surprised to find in the pages of the bible a language to express the pain that comes from loss, and the pain that comes from fear. They are prayers of lament, lamentations of one kind or another. What they have in common is that they are cries from the heart, shouts of suffering, groans of anguish, and even screams for help. One we will soon come across is in the Responsorial Psalm for our 33rd Sunday: 'Keep me safe, O God; you are my hope.'

Cries, shouts, and groans to God when people are in acute pain not only help people express themselves. They are also expressions of hope that things can get better. Lamentation, then, is not pessimistic, it is trustful. It refuses to remain powerless and passive in the face of pain, frustration, disappointment, or disaster.

When that poor blind beggar Bartimaeus hears that Jesus is nearby, he shouts his desperate lament: 'Son of David, Messiah Jesus, have pity on me.' But some of those nearby resent him expressing his pain and shouting for help. They tell him to just 'shut up.' But Bartimaeus knows that if things are ever going to change for the better, he must communicate to Jesus the loss of his sight and his lack of any income to buy food, clothing, or any of the necessities of life. Having been blind nearly all his life, he's had enough of living in his world of total darkness, and he's just not going to take it anymore. So, with the arrival of Jesus on the scene, he's convinced that right here and right now is his only chance of a brand-new start.

His cries for help stop Jesus in his tracks. He tells the bystanders to reach out to Bartimaeus by calling him over. They now change their tune. 'Courage,' they say, 'Get up; he is calling you.' Softly and tenderly, Jesus asks him: 'What do you want

me to do for you?' When the blind man blurts out his desperate plea, there and then Jesus heals him and praises him for expressing his faith in Jesus, his life-saver. Saved by that faith, Bartimaeus goes on to use his newly restored sight to follow Jesus along the road, as his newest and most enthusiastic disciple.

So, this marvellous healing of the blind man takes place as the result of a prayer of lamentation. Its story reminds us that in our frustration and anger over bad things that happen to us or others, in situations of acute pain, it's quite all right and indeed advisable, to give vent to our feelings, and even, like Bartimaeus, to yell or even scream at God for help. After all, God is big enough, great and good enough, to absorb all our cries of pain and all our cries for help.

But if, on the other hand, we've been brought up to think that the religious response to pain and suffering should be silence and passivity, then we won't ever pray those prayers of complaint and lament to God that we need to pray. We'll just take it all on the chin, and fall into a crumpled heap of depression and anxiety. To do that, however, means that we will be depriving ourselves of a language to state our suffering. Instead of honestly telling God our loving Father and Mother exactly what we are thinking and feeling, our prayer will be a kind of polite and reverent game of 'make-believe'.

We will also deprive ourselves of the possibility of divine help and healing in one form or another. Just as Bartimaeus touched the heart of Jesus and found the comfort and healing he needed in his life-long predicament, you and I will also find that our prayers of lament will go straight to the heart of God. In every painful situation and especially when we find ourselves or others burdened with unbearable pain, may we also hear Jesus our Saviour saying to us too, those same tender and gentle words he spoke to Blind Bartimaeus: 'What do you want me to do for you?'

May the Passion of Jesus Christ and his everlasting love be always within our minds and hearts!

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In Christ Crucified

Tom cp

Provincial Superior

Further Information

Get regular in-between news, see our Province Facebook page:

The Passionists Holy Spirit Province :

<https://www.facebook.com/pg/HolySpiritProvince/posts/>

Our Holy Spirit Province website:

<https://www.passionists.com/>

For regular Charism & Spirituality updates visit Fr. Gary's Blog: The Passionist Charism

<https://passionistcharism.wordpress.com/>

For Passionist International news, visit the Congregational website

“Passio Christi”:

<http://www.passiochristi.org/>

For news from our Passionist Youth Ministry

<https://www.passionistyouth.com.au/>

For those discerning their future, our Vocation website is

<https://www.beapassionist.org.au/>

For those wishing to financially assist our missions and ministries through our Foundation: A Passionist Heart, visit:

<https://www.apassionistheartfoundation.com/>

For news from our Passionist Family Groups:

Australia: <http://www.pfgm.org/>

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