

**Catholic Church of the Beatitudes
Santa Barbara, CA**

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle B – October 28, 2012

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Reflections on “Priesthood Sunday,”
with **Jer 31:7-9; Heb 5:1-6** and **Mark 10:46-52**

Today, the last Sunday of October, is Priesthood Sunday in our Roman Catholic Church. It is a day set aside to honor and pray for Priests.

After a gathering in San Diego last weekend with four other communities led by RCWP priests, I became even more aware of the *universal call to priesthood*. I heard the laity of several communities express their desire and perceived need for more lay involvement in the RCWP organization.

I also heard the desire of the laity to exercise their call to the “priesthood of the baptized.” Together the ordained to priesthood and those claiming their priesthood of the baptized questioned and pondered how these evolving Church communities can grow and support one another in their similarities and in their differences.

One of the things that struck me so strongly last weekend is how each RCWP community was shaped uniquely by the gifts and talents inherent in each community. It reminded me so much of the early communities that were formed following the death and resurrection of Jesus. Each community held common beliefs; yet each was also unique. That is what we need to keep in our hearts and in our prayers this weekend—an extended understanding of Priesthood Sunday!

As we are coming to the close of the Liturgical year, this is a good time for us to pause and reflect on how we are maturing in the Spirit. We have completed our fourth year together and are now in the beginning of the fifth year.

To what degree have our eyes been opened? Has it been a good year for us individually and for our community? Have we gained new insights?

In the article by John Wilkins entitled “From peritus to pope: the causes of Ratzinger’s about-face” in *A Church Reborn*, the NCR special edi-

tion on the 2nd Vatican Council, I extrapolated the following:

The council was replacing one paradigm with another. Instead of a pyramid with the pope at the top and authority flowing downward, the image now was of a circle of communion of all the people of God, drawing their spiritual life from Eucharist and Scripture, and journeying as pilgrims with all humanity.

Do we experience this new paradigm shift in our Beatitudes Community?

Today’s readings provide us with a great opportunity to pause and reflect and see if we are truly maturing in the Spirit. In the first reading from Jeremiah, we see the picture of a people returning from a forced diaspora. The enthusiasm of the prophet spills out into imperative after imperative, urging the people to praise, exult, proclaim. This is a time of immense joy.

We, too, have found a way to come back to a vibrant Church, alive with Spirit. Are we filled with that deep joy that comes with active participation? Are we spreading the word to all those Catholics who have become disenfranchised?

In the Letter to the Hebrews we deal with the qualifications someone must meet before they can assume the responsibilities of the office of ordained priest. Chief among these is acknowledgment of the commonly shared human limitations and weaknesses inherent in the ordained priest as well as in the baptized. Perhaps the most distinguishable trait is humility.

A second qualification is the knowledge that one is called by God. In the prayer of consecration in the Ordination Rite, we pray: “Our loving Mother-Father God, guide these women, as they become servant-priests. Give them strength and

wisdom and the gifts of Your Holy Spirit. Together with the people of God inspire them in Your service for we are weak and our need is great. Our loving Mother-Father God, shower these women with the graces of priesthood. Together with the people of God, may they flourish in grace-filled, loving community, so that the words of the Gospel may reach the ends of the earth, and the family of nations, made one in Christ, become God's one, holy people." Are we a grace-filled community where the words of the Gospel are proclaimed and lived?

The story of the healing of the blindness of Bartimaeus is an interesting one. This is the second story of the healing of a blind man in the Gospel of Mark. And it is one of those rare occasions when a name is ascribed to a person receiving the healing, Bartimaeus. Unlike so many other healing narratives in which people bring those who are sick and afflicted to Jesus to be healed, in this instance, the people around the blind man try to silence him. Why might this be?

This healing took place in Jericho, the last city in the Jordan River valley before Jerusalem. Jesus and his followers are on their way to Jerusalem. In using the phrase, "Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me," Bartimaeus recognizes in Jesus the one who manifests God's fidelity to his promises.

Bartimaeus "sees" Jesus as the Messiah. Although he is blind to the external world, it seems that his internal and spiritual eyes are wide open. The Spirit of wisdom floods his soul and he knows who Jesus, the Son of David, truly is. And no one can stop his insistence on being brought to Jesus.

Jesus stopped and said to: "Call him here." So they called the blind man. "Do not be afraid," they said. "Get up; Jesus is calling you."

These three steps: *do not be afraid, get up, Jesus is calling you*, are the same three steps involved in any transformative journey. As we embark on our soul journeys, many of us experience fear. Where is this soul journey taking me? As Jesus heals me of my spiritual blindness, what exactly will I see? Take courage, do not be afraid, Jesus tells us over and over again.

Get up – enter into the death and rising cycle of life. Get up out of your stupor, your resistance, your fear and experience the power of Jesus the Christ's resurrection and know the power of hope.

Jesus the Christ is calling you—over and over again—your inner self senses, hears this call to come and journey with the Spirit and become one with all those who journey toward oneness.

And then we hear the intimacy of the phrase "What do you want me to do for you?" Imagine if you heard this phrase addressed to you this morning: "What do you want me to do for you?" How would you respond?

And then imagine if we heard this phrase addressed to us: "Church of the Beatitudes, what do you want me to do for you?" Would we answer: "We want to *see*. We want the scales to fall from our eyes and see as You see." Would we say: "We want to journey with your Spirit and become one with all those who journey toward oneness?"

What would *you* say?

What would *we* say?