

Homily – Vietnamese Martyrs Parish October 30th, 2021

Why did you come to Mass here today? Yes, it is the Lord's Day and we are breaking ground for the shrine of Our Lady of La Vang. But what is the deeper reason? Are you lonely, discouraged, confused, worried, hurting? Why are you here?

The prophet Jeremiah describes a joyful return home to people living in exile, far from their homeland. The return will be a new Exodus even greater than the first. In the first Exodus God had given his thirsty, wandering people water from a rock. On the return from exile there will be streams of flowing water in abundance, for God is the father of his people. But who are the people? Everyone, including mothers and pregnant women, the blind, the lame -- the most vulnerable among the people. Are you feeling estranged or alone this morning? God is inviting you home – among his faithful people – to this house of God!

Do you feel unworthy or sinful? That is true of all of us. The Letter to the Hebrews describes Jesus as our high priest. While fully divine, he also shares in our human weakness, except for sin. He can identify with our blindness, our deafness, our paralysis in our daily lives. We have nothing to fear from him. Jesus offers us God's mercy and love.

Jesus asks the blind man, "What do you want me to do for you?" Bartimaeus gives a simple answer: I want to see. The crowds had tried to silence him: don't bother Jesus! But Jesus looks on him with God's eyes and calls him to himself. Jesus affirms his faith, and

Bartimaeus now sees fully and clearly. He follows Jesus along the road – that leads to Jerusalem, to Calvary, and to new life.

My dear friends, we gather as a community of faith. We acknowledge that every life is worth living! Every life, without exception! That is the message of Jesus and the Gospel. That is the constant message of Pope Francis. He calls us to acknowledge our weakness and sin. His mercy is the way for our sins not to rob us of peace, as long as we do not make peace with our sins. We are all in need of healing, conversion, and new vision. The Holy Father challenges us to look upon events and people with the eyes of faith – as God sees them. He invites us to continue Jesus’ mission and ministry. He describes the Church as a field hospital on a battlefield, binding up the wounds of all whom we encounter. We just began a synodal process about synodality, to which he summoned the Church. He tells us that throughout this path, it is “necessary to listen to the suffering of the poor, the last, the desperate, the families who are tired...” He invites us to listen to each other, to communicate in order to share who we are as individuals, so that we realize who we are as God’s People. It is a process of conversion that above all requires humility.

May Our Lady of La Vang, who promises to be with us always, help us to serve all of God’s people, especially the most needy, the forgotten, the vulnerable, those on the edge of the community. All those like Bartimaeus, our sisters and brothers.