

# Gospel to Life



By Jay de la Cruz, SFO, Oakland, CA  
Blessed Junipera Serra Region

Many people from all over the world look at USA as the place where one can draw from the well for prosperity, a good job, a better life, buy a comfortable house, drive fast cars, entertainment galore, eat good food, and basically live a happier life. At least for me and my family, that was what we aimed for and through hard work and perseverance, we have accomplished most of it.

Just like the woman at the well in the Gospel of John, we continuously go to where that “happier” life can be found and still we are found wanting and are tirelessly searching for that life. For the thirst that needs to be quenched, we should look no further than what Jesus told the woman at the well, “. . .Whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst; the water I shall give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” Our dogged pursuit for success in our careers, in buying not only one house, but two, enlarging our assets far more than needed, working two or three jobs to support our lifestyles, holding on to power without regard to ethics or moral principles...these are the five husbands that the woman at the well had allowed to rule her life. There is no end in sight to satisfy any of them at any time. Our want is always ahead of us. If we could just focus on one “husband” – Jesus Christ – to govern our lives, the spring of living water would finally quench that thirst for eternal life.

The woman left her jar by the well as soon as that encounter with Jesus changed her life. We are asked to do the same. Leave those endeavors which take our focus away from Jesus. Our lives should revolve around Him alone. Whatever gifts we have received from God, we must freely give to others, for those gifts are not for us to keep for ourselves alone. Those abundant blessings have to be shared so that the homeless may have a roof over their heads, the naked, clothes on their backs, the thirsty, something to drink, the sick, someone to comfort them, and the hungry, food to eat. This is the water that wells up to eternal life.

Lastly, the woman upon hearing the “good news” became the first evangelizer in the Gospel of John. So too, we must not hesitate to spread the good news to others, so that they too may know about the “living water” that brings about eternal life - a life of happiness and fulfillment.

Our Franciscan community (in the Third Order) is one source for that water, where we can bring it to others who may need to be refreshed. Our meetings, monthly newsletter, works of mercy, sacramental piety and other activities (individual and group) are all vehicles wherein God touches other people’s lives through us (imperfect) vessels for Jesus’ presence in this world.

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## ***THE STORY OF BARTIMAEUS*** ***Mark 10:46-52***

By Jay De La Cruz, SFO

- Darkness of Life - In Jericho, Bartimaeus was on the roadside begging.

- Perseverance - Hearing that Jesus was near, he cried out, “Jesus, son of David, have pity on me.” He called-out many times.
- Encounter - Jesus stopped and Bartimaeus came to Jesus.
- Ask - Jesus asked, “What do you want me to do for you?”-
- Discipleship - Immediately, he received his sight & followed him.

Blind means unable to see (the meaning of Jesus’ passion and the necessity to share in his suffering. As the men are given sight, they come to see the things to which they are now blind. So too, after the resurrection, the disciples came to see).

**Reflection:**

The Jesuit theologian, Pierre Teilhard Chardin said, “We are not human beings on a spiritual journey, rather we are spiritual beings on a short human journey.” It is on this short human journey that hunger, weakness, feeding our senses, and self importance are more and pressing than spiritual needs. As a consequence, fleshly desires rule our lives. This is the blindness that we are born with and living in that darkness, as Bartimaeus experienced, is not very pleasant. True, there are pleasurable cycles in our lives, but they come and go leaving only emptiness to follow.

It is in our spiritual darkness that we are called, loudly, by God to come to Him. However, many times we make the choice to rely on our own ingenuity to overcome the darkness with a quick fix. It is only when real hardship or crisis comes to us that we are willing to ask for God’s help and mercy, expecting a quick response and answer to our plea. Bartimaeus showed us that we have to persevere in calling/praying to God. He is already in us but our predisposition and acceptance of Him depends on our will to be truly united with Him. Otherwise, the encounter becomes short and fleeting, until the next crisis brings us back to him again.

When Jesus heard the persistent cry and prayer of Bartimaeus, he stopped and Bartimaeus came to Jesus freely. This encounter was the fruit of persistence by a nurtured heart, hungry for the union with God. In love and mercy, Jesus came to him. I have asked myself the question, “Why didn’t I have that encounter with the Lord early in my life?” A priest-friend told me that there was always the encounter, but I wasn’t ready for a more serious union with Him. It would have hindered me from seeing God for what he truly is.

In this meeting, Jesus asked Bartimaeus, “What do you want me to do for you?” Jesus knew that he was blind, just as he knows our needs, but He would not want to force himself on us without our asking. We have to let him know what we want and ask for the grace that it may be granted. This teaches us humility and gratitude for all that God has given us.

In the end, eyesight was granted to Bartimaeus and he could see the light. He left the darkness. We, too, can leave the darkness of self-centeredness, the crippling blindness of materialism, the paralyzing effect of addiction and pornography, the devastation of families through unfaithfulness, the numbing effect of pride and total disregard for the poor and marginalized brothers and sisters in our midst. We can follow Jesus, as did Bartimaeus, and live in the light of Christ’s love and mercy.

Bartimaeus became a disciple. In Discipleship we learn to love Him with all our hearts and souls and to love our neighbor as ourselves. (Mt 22:37-39) We cannot truly love somebody whom we do not know...we can read the Bible, hear the sermons, attend retreats, listen to religious tapes watch videos of His life and His teachings. Only then, will we be able to say, I love him for I know Him. Amen.

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**Brother Juniper**



**“By mistake, I put in QUICKSAND.”**

By Fred McCarthy, SFO