

[Spirituality](#)



Migrants, part of a caravan of thousands traveling from Central America to the United States, rest in a makeshift camp Oct. 29 in Santiago Niltepec, Mexico. (CNS/Reuters/Hannah McKay)



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Before we actually celebrate the ceremony of confirmation, it's important for the candidates and also for all of us — most of us have been confirmed, so it's important for all of us to reflect on the scripture lessons of today and what they tell us about this Sacrament of Confirmation and what it should mean in our lives. First of all, I remind you of the opening prayer which I prayed a few moments ago where we ask God to send the Holy Spirit upon these candidates to make them witnesses before the world to the good news proclaimed by Jesus Christ.

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

[October 28, 2018](#)

Jeremiah 31:7-9

Psalms 126

Hebrews 5:1-6

Mark 10:46-52

That's very important. We pray that you will be witnesses to the good news of Jesus and that the message of love, joy, peace, and goodness that Jesus has brought for all people may be proclaimed by you, not so much in words, but how you live your life. That's what it means to be a witness. You show to people around us who Jesus is — what he taught, how he lived, what he asks of us. You witness to the good news of Jesus.

In today's lesson, the three lessons of today, there are a couple of very important points about witnessing to Jesus. First of all, it requires some change in our lives and not just one time only, but we have to be continuing to change, to be converted to Jesus and to his way. It's dramatic in the gospel lesson. Bartimaeus, the blind beggar who the crowd was pushing aside — you can almost hear them saying to him, "Be quiet. Don't cause a fuss." "Why would he bother with you, you poor beggar?"

Bartimaeus won't take that. He says, "Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me," and repeats his cry in spite of the fact that the people discouraged him. Jesus, of course, calls him over. Bartimaeus immediately begins dramatically to change his life. He gets rid of his old cloak and he starts a new life, coming before Jesus. I hope you notice this: how Jesus is so respectful of Bartimaeus. Jesus obviously would know what he wanted, he was blind, but respectfully, Jesus gives him the dignity of making his own request.

Jesus treats him as a person, with dignity. He respects him and says, "What do you want?" Of course Bartimaeus says, "I want to see." Jesus says, "Your faith has restored your sight." He could see immediately. But he was ready to change his life because what St. Mark tells us after he got rid of his old cloak and ran up to Jesus he began to follow Jesus on the way of Jesus. This was the journey of Jesus to Jerusalem, the last journey of his life. Bartimaeus turned around his life to become a disciple of Jesus.

I hope that as we reflect on this interaction between Jesus and Bartimaeus, we ourselves look at the way we treat the poor. Do we really show them respect; recognize their dignity as sons and daughters of God? Or do we get annoyed saying, "Why are they standing there at that intersection? Why can't they go get work?" There are lots of reasons. Jesus made no judgments. He immediately reached out in love to the poor blind man Bartimaeus. That's how we should respond — with love, respecting the dignity of every person, and showing how we understand that every one of us is a son or daughter of God, worth the love of God, which was poured forth upon the poor and all of us.

But there's another element in today's readings, which may be even more difficult for some of us in the circumstances in which we live right now in our world. That comes to us from the first lesson. In the first lesson Jeremiah is describing what will happen when the chosen people begin to return from exile. They've been in exile for over 80 years. They were forced out of their homes because of violence, because of poverty, and they found their way into another country. Now God is making ready their return.

Do you remember Jesus himself was in exile, was a refugee? At the time he was born, Herod declared a time of violence in Bethlehem killing all the babies in Bethlehem under two years of age. Mary and Joseph took the child and went into

exile, were refugees in Egypt until God said it was safe to return. We have a situation where we have people wanting to come to our country. They're fleeing violence, they're fleeing poverty, they're fleeing a situation where they can't raise their children. They have to find a better place and they leave everything.

What are we preparing to do? Block their way; even send soldiers to keep them out. How could that be the way of Jesus? Not if you listen to the scriptures today. God welcomes the stranger. Do you remember the scene in the Gospel of Matthew at the Last Judgment when Jesus said, "When I was hungry you gave me to eat, when I was thirsty you gave me to drink, when I was naked you clothed me, when I was a stranger you took me in." They said, "When did we do that?" "When you did it to the least of my brothers and sisters, you did it to me."

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If we're going to be faithful to the message of Jesus and be witnesses to his good news that God loves everyone, God wants us to be one human family, brothers and sisters, all of us together helping one another — if we're going to be faithful to that message of Jesus, perhaps there are ways we have to change our thinking, change our actions in order to follow Jesus. As we celebrate this sacrament today, God will pour forth the Holy Spirit upon these young people.

But also it can be a time for all of us to renew that Spirit of Jesus within our own hearts that we received in a special way in our baptism and confirmation so that every one of us, as we welcome these young people into the blessings of this sacrament, every one of us will renew our own commitment to let the Holy Spirit work within our hearts to change us so that they can, in a special way now, begin to be witnesses to the good news of Jesus.

We also will deepen our own commitment to do what Bartimaeus did — throw off whatever keeps us back and follow Jesus, live according to his way, his teachings, his way of love. The Holy Spirit will guide us; give us the strength and courage to do it if we open ourselves. So this evening we celebrate this sacrament for these young people, but we also give thanks that all of us are called to be witnesses, and we renew our commitment to change our lives in whatever way we need in order to go along the way and follow Jesus and be his witness to the world in which we live.

[Homily given Oct. 27 at a confirmation ceremony at St. Louis Parish, Clinton Township, Michigan. The transcripts of Bishop Thomas Gumbleton's homilies are [posted weekly](#) to NCRonline.org. [Sign up here](#) to receive an email alert when the latest homily is posted.]