

8th Thursday in Ordinary Time Cycle I/St. Katherine Drexel  
March 3, 2011  
Fr. Joe Bambenek  
Our Lady of Lourdes, Arlington, VA

Text in blue font omitted from preached homily for brevity

Sirach 42:15-25

Psalm 33

Mark 10:46-52

In today's gospel we hear the blind beggar Bartimaeus crying out to Jesus for healing. However, the first response he received was that of others yelling at him to be quiet; to remain in his blindness. Yet Jesus heard Bartimaeus' pleas. [Following the sudden encouragement of the disciples](#), Bartimaeus is cured of his blindness; and Bartimeaus is ready to follow Jesus with great joy as Jesus embarks upon His final journey to Jerusalem. It is a reminder to us that when we seek God's healing, or for His direction in our lives; sometimes there are screams that seek to block our path. Sometimes those screams come from people around us; people who like us as we are and don't want us to change. Sometimes those screams come from within: from our fears, from our own comfort with our sins or at least with the lifestyle we are living.

This gospel is particularly fitting for the reason I am here to celebrate Mass with you today. [As was mentioned at the start of Mass, my name is Fr. Joe Bambenek. I was ordained a priest of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis Minnesota last May.](#) I have come here today to celebrate with you a Mass of Thanksgiving for my ordination because during a several year span over a decade ago, it was not unusual to find me sitting in one of the back pews at this Mass, when I was staying in Crystal City hotels for weekly business meetings. During those years, in part because of attending Mass daily, I was coming to see more clearly God's call for me to become a priest. Yet there were screams attempting to drown it out, [to keep me in my blindness](#). Particularly internal screams of fear: fear of what others would think of me if I left a great job for the priesthood; and even louder screams of fear of the loneliness that I feared would be involved in a life of permanent celibacy. [Fortunately, God in one way or another directed a number people my way with the message Jesus had the Apostles tell Bartimaeus, "Take courage; get up, Jesus is calling you."](#) Because I realize that most of you need to get to work soon, I will spare you the details of how [I received my vocational sight](#). [Obviously, I have ended up like Bartimaeus did: following Jesus with clear vocational sight.](#) If nothing else, hopefully at 6:55 AM you can see on my face the joy of the healed Bartimaeus as I follow Jesus in the priesthood.

In my joyful afterglow from ordination, I return here to say thank you to Our Lady of Lourdes Church and its parishioners for having this 6:45 AM Mass and for the impact it had in giving sight to my vocational eyes. On this Memorial of the American saint Katherine Drexel, I also return here to encourage you to be open to follow where God might be calling you: to have the courage to follow Him and even cry out to Him for help to get there in spite of the screams to the contrary. To follow courageously, even if doing so means a dramatic change in life like our sainted American experienced, like Bartimaeus experienced, and as I have experienced. Doing so with the trust that God's vision for our lives is far better than the blindness of our own limited sight, and doing so with the trust that there can be much joy on the journey with Jesus, even if it entails some suffering.