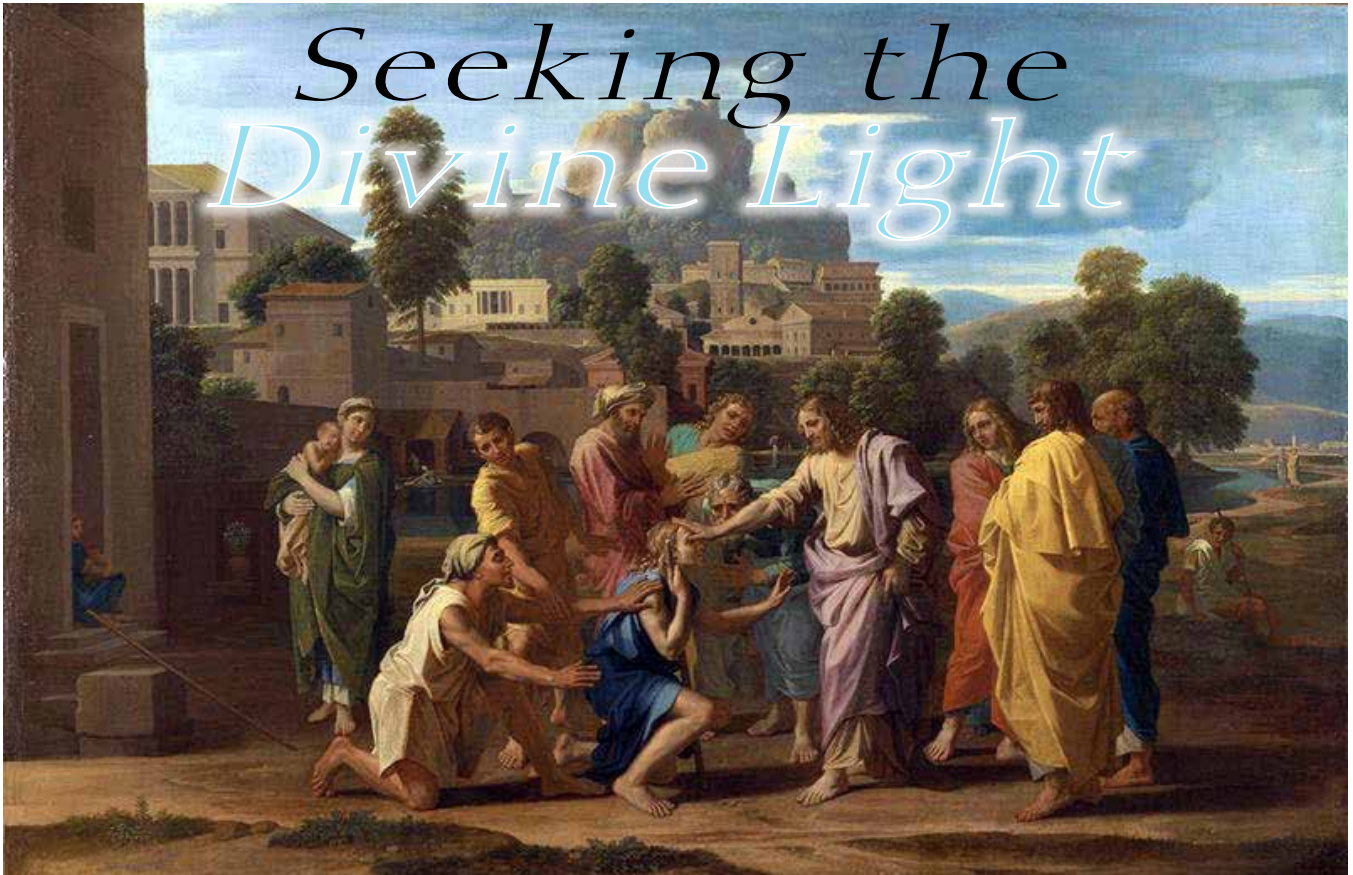


Seeking the Divine Light



Nicolas Poussin *Christ Healing the Blind Man of Jericho*, 1650

In the 10th chapter of the Gospel of St. Mark, we find the story of Bartimaeus the blind beggar. In this figure of Bartimaeus sitting by the side of the road, calling out for help, we have a wonderful image of our fallen humanity. One of the effects of original sin on our nature was the darkening of our intellects. In our present, fallen state, our minds are very prone to error and deception, especially with regard to matters touching on the moral life and the life of the spirit. The evidence of this is all around us. In the modern world we are, on the one hand, surrounded by the marvels of science and technology: our iPhones and GPS's, the Internet and the tremendous advances in medical technology. However, all these wonders exist together with a widespread darkness about the most fundamental

questions: Where do we come from? Where are we going? Is there any purpose to life? What is the source of evil in the world and is there any remedy for it? So many in the modern world live in a world of deep spiritual darkness.

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Likewise, Bartimaeus is sitting helpless by the roadside because he cannot see where he is going and he has an affliction that is beyond his power to remedy. He can't fix himself. It is not as

if God is saying to Bartimaeus: “When are you going to get your act together and do something about your blindness?” No, Bartimaeus' only hope is if he can receive help from a higher source, from a divine source outside himself. The same is true of fallen humanity sitting in the darkness of error and deception. God is not waiting for men to fix themselves and to enlighten their own

minds. He is not waiting for us to fix our system of education, to put our schools in order, He is waiting for us to call out to Him to heal our blindness. As with Bartimaeus, the only real remedy is the one which comes from outside, from a divine source. More than anything else, we need the light of God which can only be received as a gift. The most efficacious way to seek a remedy for our darkness is, like Bartimaeus, to cry out perseveringly for God to have mercy on us.

Bartimaeus' cry for help meets some serious obstacles. Many in the crowd rebuke him, telling him to be silent, but he cries out all the more. He's a fighter; in his pain and darkness he knows what he wants. In fact, Bartimaeus has already received a great light—the light of faith. He calls out to Our Lord using a Messianic title, "Son of

David," manifesting his faith in Jesus. Bartimaeus' profession of faith evokes a response in Our Lord: Christ calls him and Bartimaeus immediately responds. Here we have a beautiful image of man's redemption and way to greater sanctification. Christ calls and Bartimaeus throws off his cloak of sin and runs to Jesus. Our life of faith and the way to closer union with Him is fundamentally a life of continual response to the call of Jesus. He calls every day with His light and inspirations and the promptings of grace, but in order to go to Him we need to throw off all that impedes our spirits: our sensuality, our pride, our anger, our sloth and our attachment to the things of this world. But the most important thing is that we continually go to Jesus. It can be that our sinfulness, our sense of shame or guilt, or the awareness of our weaknesses and misery hold us back from going to Jesus. But He is the only one who can help us and there is no one who wants to help us

as much.

When Bartimaeus comes to Jesus, the Lord asks him: "What do you want me to do for you?" If Our Lord were to come and appear before you and ask the same question, what would you say to Him? I think the first reaction of many of us to this question would be that we would want the Lord to free us from certain difficulties, pains, sufferings, humiliations; we would want Him to free us from all that causes us to be anxious and fearful. That would be a natural response, but would freedom from those things really sat-

isfy the deepest desires of our hearts? What are the deepest desires of our hearts? It may be harder than we think to answer that question. We are easily deceived in our desires and we often make poor judgements about what is really good for us.

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Our faith teaches us that the whole purpose of our existence, the reason why we were made, was to enter into an intimate communion of love and knowledge with God and that nothing short of that communion can satisfy us. This communion of knowledge and love can already begin in this life and God wants nothing more for us than that it grow and, in this way, He wants to heal our blindness. Indeed, this communion with God can only be realized in this life in three ways: by means of the virtues of faith, hope and charity. These are the only virtues which unite our souls **immediately** to God.

The light of faith stands as the foundation. By means of it, God gives us a share in His very knowledge. When we think about the life of faith, we usually think, above all, about the assent we give to all the things that God has revealed to us: By faith we believe that God is a Trinity of Persons, that His Son became incarnate for us

and died on the cross for our sins, etc. A firm belief in these truths is fundamental for the life of our faith.

But because faith is a kind of participation in the very knowledge of God, the more we grow in the virtue of faith, the more the light of faith shines in our souls and the more we begin to see all things from God's perspective, seeing ourselves, others, and the world around us with God's eyes, as it were, which is to see things truly.

What a difference it would make in our lives if we could see ourselves with the eyes of God, if we could see ourselves from **His** perspective. We frequently have a false image of ourselves which has its source in our pride or our fears. Many people struggle with a poor self-image; many lack a sense of self-worth and question whether they are worthy of love. All these lies and deceptions would disappear if we could see ourselves as God does.

The light of faith is a healing light.

It would also make a great difference in our lives if we could look on other people from God's perspective and see them with the eyes of Christ. Perhaps then our minds would not tend to focus so much on the faults and weaknesses of others. Then also, our interior attitude and our way of looking on situations in the Church and in the world around us would probably be much different if we could see all these things from God's perspective rather than from our very limited point of view.

After Our Lord heals Bartimaeus of his blindness, we are told that he followed Christ on the way. Our Lord was on the road going up to Jerusalem to meet His passion and death. May we also, with eyes enlightened by faith, follow Jesus on the way, through His passion and death to the glory of His resurrection. ✠