

**THIRTIETH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (10/24-25/2009)**

*Jeremiah 31/7-9, Psalm 126, Hebrews 5/1-6, Mark 10/46-52*

The spirited debates on health care reform have blanketed the news media these days.

Sometimes, the debates have degenerated into rancorous name calling and disrespect for those who might hold opposing views.

The reports on several of those early “town meetings” are embarrassing what with the behavior of some of the participants.

Yet the majority of people agree on the general principles: the health care system needs some overhaul, and, in charity and justice, it should be extended to all Americans.

But when the lawmakers get down to the specifics, then the fur begins to fly.

For some reason, I couldn't help thinking about health care when I read today's Gospel.

As Jesus heads towards Jerusalem, he encounters a blind man in Jericho; the encounter is somewhat irregular.

The blind man shouts out to Jesus for help; the crowd around him tries to hush his outcry.

Eventually, Jesus calls him forth and the man is cured.

So much for effective and inexpensive health care, for one lucky man anyway!

What intrigues me is the attitude of the onlookers who did not want the blind man to upset any apple cart, or to cry out for help..

Perhaps they had grown so used to having that particular blind man hanging around, begging on the street corner, that they no longer even saw him as a human being.

He was just part of the scenery.

As we go along in our daily lives, there are many people whose plight we studiously ignore, no longer seeing them as human beings.

They are the anonymous poor and the disenfranchised, a group whose number is expanding rapidly as the recession widens.

The blind man, however, will not be silenced.

He forces his way into our consciousness and into Jesus' presence.

For his determination, he is rewarded with a cure, and, in gratitude, he joins Jesus' procession heading up towards Jerusalem.

He has beaten the system, benefited from his persistence, and now casts his lot with Jesus.

Would that the health care problems we face in this country were as easily resolved.

Of course, the Gospel is talking about one blind man being cured; in the Holy Land at the time, there had to have been hundreds more suffering from similar vision problems.

What Jesus did that went beyond the curing of one man was his forthright facing of the problem.

He could care less about the behavior of the “pushy” blind man; a man needed help, and Jesus provided it.

Jesus serves as a model for us as we face into the monumental problems of modern health care.

It won't do to politicize them, thus creating an aura of such hostility that nothing gets done; it won't do to ignore them in the hope that they will vanish.

We have to sit down in honest and civil dialogue and courageously face them together.