

The Prayers of the Blind

October 28, 2018

As we are contemplating the significance of our parish life together one of the most significant gifts and callings we yield is prayer. I have participated and witnessed the faithful offering of prayer in this parish for all these years, and I have seen the mountains be moved, the resources be provided, the sick be comforted, the stranger be welcomed, and this city be changed.

In this morning's gospel we read how the blind man, Bartimaeus, hollered out for Jesus to heal him. People tried to hush him and keep him at bay, but he would not be stifled.

I wish to wield our charism of prayer this morning on behalf of the eleven persons killed while they were attending Sabbath worship in their synagogue. I wish to pray for those who were wounded and for their families. I wish to pray for all of who were present and will live the remainder of their lives with the wounds of trauma.

I wish to pray for these times and this nation. I wish to pray for the condition of our growing blindness inflicted by fear and violence and hatred and division. Quoting one journalist reporting on yesterday's assault upon Jewish Americans, "*The Pittsburgh massacre is yet another example of the homicidal fury and bigotry on the fringes of American society. It weaves together elements of many other active-shooter incidents that have horrified Americans in recent years, and highlighted the unusual frequency of mass casualty events in this country in comparison with almost every other nation in the world.*"

I believe the recurring acts of violence and fear, blame and political division in our nation has created a spirit of darkness and blindness throughout our country and our world. I think people feel powerless and confused and vulnerable to the endless barrage and exposure to anger, arrogance and fear.

This morning I want to join the voices around our country and world who most certainly be praying in the aftermath of this massacre. I want to commit a larger portion of our shared liturgy to the work of prayer. I want us to be Bartimaeus this morning and call out, "*Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on us!*"

Following each prayer I invite you to come forward and place petals of flowers into the cauldron. We pray the waters in it are blessed like that of the pool at Bethesda in Jesus' day that offered healing for people who dipped their hands into it when the waters were stirred.