

30th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B

GOSPEL

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As Jesus left Jericho with his disciples and a large crowd, Bartimaeus (that is, the son of Timaeus), a blind beggar, was sitting at the side of the road. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout and to say, 'Son of David, Jesus, have pity on me.' And many of them scolded him and told him to keep quiet, but he only shouted all the louder, 'Son of David, have pity on me.' Jesus stopped and said, 'Call him here.' So they called the blind man. 'Courage,' they said 'get up; he is calling you.' So throwing off his cloak, he jumped up and went to Jesus. Then Jesus spoke, 'What do you want me to do for you?' 'Rabbuni,' the blind man said to him 'Master, let me see again.' Jesus said to him, 'Go; your faith has saved you.' And immediately his sight returned and he followed him along the road.

(Mark 10:46-52)

DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

- The title 'Son of David' was one applied to the longed-for anointed one of God. Its use here indicates that Bartimaeus has recognised Jesus as the Messiah.
- The 'blind faith' of Bartimaeus contrasts sharply with the lack of insight and understanding we have witnessed from the disciples in recent weeks.
- Jericho is the main town on the west bank of the Jordan River in the south. It was the crossing point for people journeying from the north and led to the main road up to Jerusalem, 22 kilometres away. Jesus' journey to Jerusalem, and to his death, has almost ended.
- In Hebrew, *Bar* means 'son of' in much the same way as *Mac* is used in Scotland. When a Jewish boy undergoes his Barmitzvah, he becomes a 'son of the law'.
- While *Rabbi* means 'master' or 'teacher', *Rabbuni* is usually employed to express familiarity with or devotion to the master or teacher.

EXPLORING THE WORD

This scene from the gospel is very easy to picture in our minds. A blind beggar sits in the dusty gutter in his despair and abandonment. Most people would look the other way and ignore him. To be afflicted in such a way was thought to be a result of sinfulness. But Bartimaeus hears the noise of the crowd and tunes in.

No doubt, in the commotion, he hears others saying that it is Jesus of Nazareth who approaches. The cry of Bartimaeus is very instructive: 'Son of David, have pity on me.' The blind man recognises not only who Jesus is, but what he can do. He is the Messiah, therefore he can make the blind see. Jesus responds with a classic invitation to discipleship: 'Call him here.' In response to this call to come to Jesus (and in contrast to the rich young man), Bartimaeus leaves behind what is probably his only possession, his cloak, and presents himself in his nothingness, ready to be filled with all that Jesus can offer. His faith, his receptivity and his response to the invitation are rewarded. His sight restored, he follows Jesus along the road. What a profound lesson there is to be learned from Bartimaeus.

- From whom do you learn in your efforts to follow Jesus along the road?
- 'They told him to keep quiet'. Are there voices that try to discourage you as you journey forward?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- Have you called out to Jesus as blind Bartimaeus did? What would you call?
- 'Your faith has saved you.' What does this mean to you at this point in your journey?
- What are you prepared to 'throw off' in order to follow Jesus?
- Have you ever been in a position where someone took pity on you? How did you feel?
- Share a time when you were moved to pity someone else? What did you do? How did they respond?
- 'Courage, get up; he is calling you.' Reflect on these words this week. What are you being called to at this moment? Find ways to act on that calling this week.
- Use this week's psalm response as your prayer:

*The Lord has done great things for us;
we are filled with joy.*

