

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

When we look at the way we pray, we may well find that the prayer of petition is the more frequent of our prayers. We turn to God when our need is great. This seems to be true of prayer in every age. There are one hundred and fifty prayers in the Book of Psalms in the Bible, and the type of prayer that occurs most frequently there is the prayer of petition. The Gospels are full of people's heartfelt prayers of petition addressed to Jesus. We have a very good example of such a prayer in today's Gospel story. A blind man, sitting at the side of the road, calls out in Prayer to Jesus as Jesus was leaving Jericho to travel up to Jerusalem, 'Son of David, have pity on me'. **He may have been physically blind, but he saw Jesus with the eyes of faith, addressing him with a title that was reserved for the long-awaited Messiah.**

In his prayer, he didn't speak politely to Jesus. According to the Gospel reading, he shouted at Jesus. **He may have been blind but he had a voice and he was going to use it to connect with Jesus.** The crowds around Jesus reacted to his shouting by giving out to him and trying to impose silence on him. **In response, the man simply shouted all the louder.** He would allow no one to come between himself and Jesus. It was his desperate need that drove him to seek out the Lord with such single-minded determination.

Bartimaeus displays the kind of persevering, prayerful, courageous faith that we all need from time to time. This vulnerable person encourages us to keep seeking after the Lord, even when those around us try to discourage us from reaching the Lord. In various ways, the times in which we live can put pressure on us to hold back from expressing our faith in the Lord. We need something of the spirit of Bartimaeus today. **He may have been weak in body, but he was strong in spirit.** His faith in Jesus was stronger than the efforts of people to silence him. Bartimaeus inspires us to witness to our faith, when the pressure to keep our faith to ourselves is strong. Jesus' response to the blind man's cry was very different to the response of those around him. The Gospel reading says, 'Jesus stopped'. He was heading for Jerusalem where **He would suffer an even greater form of exclusion than Bartimaeus was presently experiencing.** It was the most significant journey of Jesus' life, and, yet, the persistent and courageous prayer of Bartimaeus stopped him in his tracks. The Lord always stops for us whenever we turn to Him in our need. Whereas the people around Jesus tried to silence the blind man, Jesus now instructs those same people to call him over. **Rather than being an obstacle to this blind man's efforts to reach Jesus, they are to bring him to Jesus.** We all have a role to play in bringing each other to the Lord.

Bartimaeus' response to the Lord's call is very striking, 'throwing off his cloak, he jumped up and came to Jesus'. The energy and vigor that he displays is an outward expression of his deep faith. Jesus now addresses him in a very personal way, **'What do you want me to do for you?'** However, Bartimaeus doesn't go on his way. Instead, he follows in Jesus' way, along the road to Jerusalem. Having abandoned his most prized possession, he becomes a disciple, following in the way of the Lord. This is where his heartfelt prayer led him. It is where our own heartfelt prayer to the Lord will lead us too. Whenever we seek the Lord in prayer, with the determination of Bartimaeus, we too will be given the freedom and the strength to follow the Lord as his faithful disciple.