

Sunday.30

Let us contemplate this miracle story about Bartimaeus, the blind man. If you want, read the text again with me, or, if you prefer, simply listen as I speak. When I am finished speaking, I will give you three or four minutes just to pray quietly before we continue the Mass.

Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem. He feels compelled to go there even though he can see that he will meet his end there at the hands of his enemies. He is leaving the city of Jericho which is just fifteen miles from Jerusalem. A crowd is accompanying him. As they walk along, a blind beggar by the name of Bartimaeus who is sitting by the side of the road hears the crowd approaching and asks who is coming. When he is told that Jesus of Nazareth is approaching he begins to cry out, “Jesus, son of David, have pity on me.” Those around him try to quiet him because he is making a scene, but he refuses to stop. Indeed, he cries out all the more: “Son of David, have pity on me.” Jesus hears him and stops. “Call him,” he says. Now the same people who tried to quiet him tell him: “Don’t be afraid! Jesus is calling you.” Bartimaeus throws aside his cloak, springs up and goes to Jesus. “What do you want me to do for you,” Jesus asks him. “Master, I want to see,”

Bartimaeus answers. “Be on your way,” Jesus tells him. “Your faith has saved you.” And immediately Bartimaeus could see. And now he joined the crowd following Jesus.

We reflect now. We pray. We make ourselves Bartimaeus. We hear Jesus call us. We get up, leaving behind whatever may hinder us from getting to him. And when we get to him, we ask that we may see. There is such blindness in our lives. Maybe we are not sight-impaired in the physical sense, but the blindness of our minds and hearts is another matter. We understand so little of what we do and why we do it, or we half-understand and that is enough. We dare not look further. We don’t want to look at the things we know we should do and do not do. We don’t want to see the smallness of our minds and hearts.

If we are truthful, we have to admit that we have not gotten up from the side of the road. We have not thrown off the things that keep us from getting to Jesus. We don’t really cry out to him. We lack what Bartimaeus had: an overwhelming desire to get to Jesus and be heard and healed by him. We just sit at the side of the road in our blindness and mumble to ourselves, “Jesus, have pity on me,” but so inaudibly that no one, not even those around us, and certainly not Jesus, can hear us.

And so we pray: “Lord, give us Bartimaeus’s overwhelming desire to come to you and be healed by you, for without that desire we will not move. We won’t get up. We won’t throw off all the things that keep us from you. We won’t run to you. We won’t dare to expose our blindness to you by crying out in a loud voice: “Master, I want to see.”