

## 30<sup>th</sup> Sunday OT – Mark 10:46-53

Jesus' journey to Jerusalem in Mark begins and ends with accounts of **healing of blind men**. The first, at Bethsaida, is effected in two stages. The man sees men like trees walking. This blind man is a symbol of Peter who was prepared to accept Jesus as a triumphant Christ but not as the suffering Son of Man. The second, at Jericho, is also to be understood in a wider symbolic sense. From it, we learn not only about the ability of Jesus to heal the blind but it also instructs us about the behavior of a true disciple.

Unlike James and John who asked Jesus for places at his right and his left in his glory, Bartimaeus prayed for what he really needed, **his sight**. His prayer was one that the disciples, who had eyes that did not see and ears that did not hear, should have prayed themselves but never did. Initially, Jesus ignored the prayer of Bartimaeus. His cry of Son of David showed that his understanding of Jesus was limited. The ever-fickle crowd told him to keep quiet. He continued with his petition. When at last Jesus gave orders for him to be called, the crowd cried, "Courage, rise, he calls you."

At once, Bartimaeus leapt up to go to Jesus. **He threw aside his cloak**, his means of livelihood by day and of warmth at night. To obey the call of Jesus, he cast aside his most valuable possession. When he had for the third time repeated his petition, Jesus gave him what he wanted.

Bartimaeus is the perfect disciple. He put his limited faith to good use and earned the praise of Jesus. Not for him the reluctant and fearful following to Jerusalem of the other disciple, but a willing and enthusiastic **joining of Jesus on the way**, wherever that way might lead. His prayer has been keenly imitated through many generations.

Today's reflection in *Give Us This Day* is written by Fr. Albert Nolan, who also wrote a book called **Jesus Before Christianity**. Fr. Nolan was an influential leader in the struggle against apartheid in his native South Africa. I remember reading his book before I made the connection to the apartheid struggle of this African country South of Zambia where I lived. His comment on today's passage was interesting. He writes,

"Looking at the healing that was breaking out all around him, Jesus saw it as a result of faith. He did not say, "I healed you," or even "God healed you," but

**"Your faith has healed you."** And he continues, "In other words, there were no magic formulas or magic wands. This kind of healing was a manifestation of the power of faith."

Fr. Nolan goes on to explain that "In the first place, it is clearly faith in God, not only in the existence of God or even the power of God, but, as Jesus saw it, faith in God as **the loving and forgiving Father**. Faith is a particular kind of consciousness, the consciousness of God or the divine, as loving and caring toward us...The faith that Jesus is talking about means trusting that God will do what is best—which may not be what you or I want. True faith includes praying that God's will may be done."

Over these past few months, we have read from Mark's gospel Jesus' three predictions of his passion and death. Each time the disciples refused to hear, in fact after the first prediction they totally turned off and instead requested placed of position in his kingdom, especially one to sit on his right and the other on his left. Some things just don't change. Last Sunday at the Gov Island I compared the gospel reading to today's Church, when Constantine made the church leaders literally sharers in governing his empire, with all the regalia that went with it and that made its way into our Liturgy.

And yet, the recognition of Jesus' passion and death is simply a reminder that all who seriously follow him may have to suffer the same. Even those who were healed, like Bartimaeus and those he rose from the dead like Lazarus, will still have to suffer and die again. That is why the story of Bartimaeus is so powerful, considering the suffering the early church had to go through from the Roman government.

Well, what comfort is there then in following Jesus? Simply the comfort that comes from knowing that at our death we will be in a good place with the Lord if we have followed Jesus at the very least in fidelity. God looks for faithfulness in our relationship just as we would expect it from others, especially from our spouses and close friendships.