

30th Sunday in Ordinary Time – October 24th, 2021
A Reflection by Fr Sylvester O’Flynn OFM Cap., Rochestown, Cork

Bartimaeus and the Jesus Prayer

On the last seven Sundays our readings from Mark’s Gospel gave moral instructions on how to follow the way of Jesus. In today’s extract, Bartimaeus is a model of discipleship. Initially he is blind, stopped on the roadside, going nowhere. He is desperate for the restoration of sight. He has heard about Jesus and how he has healed people. Now he hears that this Jesus is passing by. This is his chance. He shouts aloud, “Son of David, Jesus, have pity on me.” People scold him and tell him to keep quiet. Jesus stops and says “Call him here.” He throws off his cloak, jumps up and stumbles his blind steps towards Jesus. “Master, let me see again”

Symbols of Baptism

Casting off his cloak is a baptismal symbol of discarding the old ways before being clad in the white garment. Then, rising up expresses how one rises to new life at baptism. We are told that he followed Jesus on the way.

What must I cast off if I am to rise up and follow Jesus?

Blindness to the light of Jesus comes in many forms.

We are blind in being prejudiced ... unable to see another opinion ... unwilling to change ... seeing only the faults of others ... never affirming others ... passing by on the other side when somebody desperately needs help ... insensitive to the feelings of others.

A conscience is blind which no longer admits guilt.

We may be blind to the beauty of God’s creation ... lacking in any sense of wonder.

Do I walk in the light of Christ? Do I radiate his light?

The Jesus Prayer

The cry of Bartimaeus is the inspiration of the Jesus Prayer. Linked with the humble prayer of the publican in the temple, the classical formula of the prayer is *Lord, Jesus, Son of the living God, have mercy on me a sinner.*

In biblical times, people believed that the name called up the presence and power of the person. That explains why the gospels tell of evil demons calling Jesus by the most beautiful names in the hope of receiving his power. Our liturgical prayers are offered to God the Father in the name of Jesus Christ.

Bartimaeus can be our inspiration. Since we do not see God, we are all blind in prayer. Faith is but a dim light. In times of darkness or fatigue we long for a tangible sign, something to see, something to hold on to. The sacred name of Jesus is what we have. In his name is his presence and power. The Jesus Prayer develops a constant attentiveness to the presence of the Risen Lord Jesus in our lives. With Bartimaeus, we rise up and follow Jesus as the way, the truth and the life.