

In today's readings the work of redemption, which is ultimately a work of reconciliation with God and with others, is described as a new Exodus where no one should be left behind.

In today's First Reading Jeremiah describes the gathering of the scattered Israelites in exile as a sort of new Exodus, a new pilgrimage, where even the weak, sick, and helpless won't be left behind. Yet not everyone makes it.

The Letter to the Hebrews reminds us that the Lord, our High Priest, in becoming man took up the human condition to make it easier for us to identify with him in his humanity and turn to him as our priest.

In today's Gospel, we see the prophecy of Jeremiah taking shape. Our Lord starting to gather together everyone, heal them, and lead them. Yet there is still some blindness, some weakness, and ignorance, to overcome.

Crowds are starting to follow Our Lord, and in Biblical symbolism moving away from Jericho is often considered as moving away from sin, especially when heading from there to Jerusalem.

A blind beggar, Bartimaeus is sitting beside the road. He hears all the noise, is told that Jesus is passing by, and

begins to call out: "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

He must have heard stories about Jesus as a marvellous healer.

However, the people around tell him to be quiet. After all, he's only a poor beggar. He should not disturb an important person like Jesus.

In our life many people, things, and concerns can prevent us coming to Jesus. How often we "have no time" for Mass, prayer, getting involved in Church activities. But worse, how often have we blocked someone approaching Jesus?

Jesus, tells us to keep on asking.

he hears. He stops. If the man hadn't kept calling, Jesus might have continued on his journey. How many times during our day does Jesus pass by and we fail to recognise him and fail to call him? It is easy to find him in the tabernacle but less easy in a person we do not like.

The people, who just now were telling Bartimaeus to 'Shut up' now say: **"Cheer up! Rise up, he is calling you!"** There are three elements here:

*(a) encouragement*

*(b) "Rise up!" (Resurrection). The man is being called to new life, not just a physical standing up.*

*(c) "He is calling you." Lovely words which are addressed to us every single day.*

How foolish Bartimaeus would have been if he had stopped shouting because of the crowd's opposition!

The attention that Jesus gives to people as Bartimaeus is really fascinating. The patience he has with sinners, with people who are not important to society. Jesus is portrayed as the champion of those not considered worthy enough to come near to God.

So, Bartimaeus is asked: ***What do you want me to do for you?*** It is a question addressed to each of us personally, and how we answer it can reveal who we are and what we value. Here we have Jesus the High Priest described in the Second Reading from the Hebrews. Someone who, in sharing our human nature, has a deep understanding of our needs.

The man had to name his problem, and do so himself. If one of us needs to be cured of something, we need to say to God what's wrong with us. We need to name what we want from God.

Aware of his blindness as a severe disability, he asked simply, 'Master, let me see again.'

He was already seeing Jesus with the eyes of faith before he received back his physical sight. And Jesus told him that his faith had healed him. Rightly, this blind man knew that Jesus wouldn't turn away from the cry of the poor.

He threw aside his old cloak, got up, and ran to Jesus. The old cloak may be a symbol for his past, his darkness, his despair. He made an act of hope-filled faith, and Jesus did not disappoint him. All attempts of the bystanders to silence him made him more determined. He was clear about what he wanted, and knew who could help him. That's why Bartimaeus has a lesson for us all.

He did the only thing a person of vision could do: he followed Jesus on the road.

This story is a summary of the Christian's life and pilgrimage. On our own we are blind and poor with nothing of our own. Like him we are blind beggars who need to keep on calling out to the Lord who passes by so that we can see him more clearly and follow him more nearly, asking for the gift of light, throwing away the cloak of our imperfections, and then running toward Jesus.