Thursday of the Eighth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (*Mk* 10:46-52): As Jesus was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a sizable crowd, Bartimaeus, a blind man, the son of Timaeus, sat by the roadside begging. On hearing that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, “Jesus, son of David, have pity on me.” And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he kept calling out all the more, “Son of David, have pity on me.”

Jesus stopped and said, “Call him.” So they called the blind man, saying to him, “Take courage; get up, Jesus is calling you.” He threw aside his cloak, sprang up, and came to Jesus. Jesus said to him in reply, “What do you want me to do for you?” The blind man replied to him, “Master, I want to see.” Jesus told him, "Go your way; your faith has saved you.” Immediately he received his sight and followed him on the way.

“Jesus, son of David, have pity on me.”

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Today, Christ comes to meet us. We are all Bartimaeus: that blind man whom Jesus passed by and who jumped up shouting until Jesus noticed him. Perhaps we have a slightly more appealing name... but our human (moral) weakness is similar to the blindness suffered by our protagonist. We too fail to see that Christ lives in our brothers and sisters, and so we treat them as we do. Perhaps we fail to see in social injustices, in the structures of sin, a painful call to social commitment. Perhaps we don't glimpse that "it is more blessed to give than to receive," that "no one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13). We see blurred what is clear: that the illusions of the world lead to frustration, and that the paradoxes of the Gospel, despite their difficulty, bear fruit, bring fulfillment, and give life. We are truly visually impaired, not as a euphemism but in reality: our will, weakened by sin, obscures the truth in our intellect, and we choose what is not right for us.

Solution: call out to him, that is, humbly pray, “Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me” (Mark 10:47). And call out even louder the more they rebuke you, discourage you, or you lose heart: “Many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he kept calling out all the more...” (Mark 10:48). To call out is also to ask: “Master, I want to see” (cf. Mark 10:51). Solution: take, like him, a leap of faith, believe beyond our certainties, trust in the One who loved us, created us, came to redeem us, and remains with us in the Eucharist.

Saint John Paul II showed us this with his life: his long hours of meditation — so many that his secretary said he prayed “too much” — clearly tell us that “he who prays changes history.”

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “Whatever else he did to restore bodies to health, he didn't do it to make them everlasting, even though at the end he is going to give the body too everlasting health and salvation. By these temporal benefits that were seen he was building up faith in the things that were not seen.” (Saint Augustine)

- “Faith is a journey of illumination: it starts with the humility of recognizing oneself as needy of salvation and arrives at the personal encounter with Christ, who calls one to follow him on the way of love.” (Benedict XVI)

- “This simple invocation (...) ‘Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us sinners’ (...) combines the Christological hymn of Philippians 2:6-11 with the cry of the publican and the blind men begging for light. By it the heart is opened to human wretchedness and the Savior's mercy.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, Nº 2667)