



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

30th Sunday in Ordinary Time-Year B-October 24th 2021

Readings: Jeremiah 31: 7-9, Psalm 125, Hebrews 5: 1-6,

Mark 10: 46-52

Mk 10v 46 – 52 ‘I once was blind...’

I love this story. Yes, I know, it’s just another Jesus healing miracle.

I also heard the sermon many times.

The beggar is blind BUT..... once he can see he follows Jesus.

Ergo etc. All true and laudable and instructive.

What I love about this story is the human details, those little untidy bits that let you know that the Gospel is the real deal. It happened just like that.

Jesus is on his way out of the great town of Jericho, heading for Jerusalem, walking the way of the Good Samaritan and the dangerous robber roads. He is accompanied by his faithful posse of disciples and a huge crowd. They are attendant on the Revelation Roadshow, hanging on His every word, hoping to have some contact, a word, an autograph, something to tell the kids. Into this travelling circus of humanity, everyone looking their Sunday best, bursts the scruffy roadside beggar. Personal hygiene not so good doubtless, crying, screaming out so that the congregation cannot hear the Rabbi, the esteemed visiting preacher. Bar Talmi, Bartimaeus, is told to shut up. He gets a right earful. But,

undaunted, Bart is not going to give up that easily. On and on he hollers. 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.'

Two things here.

First he calls Jesus by His royal title. The Davidic line comes to fulfilment and eternity in Jesus. Jesus is heading to the royal city of David, Jerusalem, to be crowned. The disciples know this. That is why, immediately preceding this, there is the disgraceful but altogether human squabble about pride of place in the new royal court. 'Please sir, me sir, can we sit on the right and left of your throne?' They do not know that the throne will be a Cross on Calvary and the crown will be a piercing mesh of twisted thorn.

Second,

Bart uses the first last and only prayer that matters in extremis. Kyrie eleison, Lord have mercy. Lord cleanse me, Lord forgive me, Lord heal me, Lord restore me, Lord pour out your grace upon me, Lord let me know your love. It is the great prayer of longing as we approach the Presence. It appears but once in the liturgy of the West. In the Liturgy of the East it is like a drumbeat throughout the celebration. It is the final prayer of the heart before the judgement seat, before the throne of mercy.

Then watch what happens next. Jesus stops and told the same moaning dismissive group of camp followers to go and call the beggar to Him. Rapid change of demeanour here. From 'shut up you irritating bag of filth', we transform to, 'I say, old chap, well done, this way, the Master wants to see you.' And so he comes and we know the rest. Jesus asks him what he wants. Interesting. We take it for granted that he will say 'his sight' but he needn't have. He could have asked to be the richest blind man in the world. But he wants to be able to see again, to have restored what he has lost. Beggars on the kingdom road we too seek, from Jesus, the restoration of what we have lost, our eternal destiny in the Paradise of God.

Bartimaeus is an object lesson in

priority and opportunism. Nothing will put him off his one chance of mercy. When he knows Jesus is near he goes for it. There are always opportunities in life that are massive, life changing and may never re-occur. The Gospel tells us to 'go for it'. You only get one shot at it usually. Life is not a rehearsal. None of us want a life burdened by the long remembrance of regret at the road not taken, the chance not seized, the moment missed. Simple opportunities to throw yourself at the feet of Christ and ask for mercy.

Twenty years ago I stood in the crypt of St. Peter's Rome, the place abuzz with noisy, bustling, camera flashing tourists. As far as I could see no-one was praying. It was a noisy circus – but, on the principle that you only get one shot at it, I knelt and prayed. The silence grew to overwhelm the clack and clatter. Others took courage and knelt and prayed too. I could not, at that time, see where I was going. So, I just asked Jesus to show me, to let me see again. Without those fifteen minutes on my knees before the Lord, I can assure you that I would not be here this morning preaching to you and celebrating the mysteries of God, the Jerusalem road, the triumph on the hill of death of the thorn-crowned king.

When the moment comes....you gotta go for it.