

Beloved in Christ, in today's readings the church invites us to have **faith and place all our hope in Christ**, because, Jesus Christ is our **high priest, mediator and our deliver** who has come to set us free. Jesus is willing and able to open our eyes in order to see the marvels that God has worked for us. Many of us do not experience spiritual deliverance and liberty that the word of God and Jesus Christ give us whenever we approach him. Today's readings want us to meditate on that freedom through faith and to try to understand it more profoundly. We are invited to experience deliverance and freedom in our daily lives as Bartimaeus experiences in our Gospel reading. We have been freed by Christ, who has invited us to live in that freedom. The Prophet Jeremiah, in our first reading, also reflects on the deliverance and freedom of Israel, who is now free from captivity to return to the Promised Land and begin to live there once again (Jer. 31:8).

The gospel of today narrates how Jesus restored the eyesight to a blind man, named Bartimaeus. Blindness was rather common in Palestine. According to the prophets, **restoring the eye-sight to the blind would mean one of the signs of the arrival of the Messiah (Mt.11:5; Is.29:18 and 35:5)**. Early Christians attached particular importance to the cure of Bartimaeus and to that man born blind narrated by John; their healing became a favorite theme of preaching in the early Church. The reason is to be found in the fact that both healings lend themselves particularly well to convey a basic message in Christian life- deprived of faith in Christ, we are all blind people going through life groping in darkness. Faith is God's gift and the fruit of his incredible mercy; we should be ever grateful for it and faithful to it.

Mark tells us that the people got annoyed at the blind man for shouting out his plea, and they ordered him to keep quiet (Mk.10:48). But how could he...? By now, a light within his heart had helped the blind man to see that Jesus was not his only hope to recover his eye sight, but his Savior as well. A force within compelled him to shout louder and louder: "Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me." Though still blind, **the man could see who Jesus really was, far clearer than those around him**. Mark concludes his narrative by telling us that on recovering his eye-sight, Bartimaeus followed Jesus along the road (Mk.10:52). Bartimaeus obtained from Jesus a double favor: he recovered his **physical eye-sight** and obtained **spiritual eye-sight**, that is, faith in Jesus. Bartimaeus had the privilege of following Jesus as a disciple. Christ recognizes that this blind man –Bartimaeus, has deep spiritual sight and with the restoration of his physical sight, Jesus performs this last miracle before entering Jerusalem. Deprived of faith in Christ, all men are spiritually blind. Persons without faith are unable to discover Jesus passing by time and again in the events of their daily life. They are unable to see God's plan of love for them.

For a person to accept Jesus' invitation, two things are essential: one must recognize **blindness, his misery, his sinfulness, his own powerlessness**, and plead with Jesus to come to his rescue. One must become convinced that only Jesus can save him or her. As long as a person keeps on trusting in the few coins in his plate and on the walking stick by his side, he will not walk towards Jesus' and he will remain both blind and a beggar. God always sends someone to lead us to Jesus: people came and told the blind man that Jesus was calling him: "Courage, he is calling you!" (Mark 10, 49). We all need persons, or just events, joys or trials to lead us to Christ. We must allow ourselves to be led: it might be a priest, it might be a member in the family, or a friend, or perhaps a person we never met before. But that is Jesus' method: to lead people to himself through someone else. This should lead us to an important conclusion: Jesus wants to avail himself of each one of us to lead people to himself. He wants us to bring closer to him every single person we meet in our life.

Finally, brothers and sisters, the blind Bartimaeus represents our collective human situation that is constantly yearning for healing and liberation from all sorts of limitations. The blindness in questions might not necessarily be the physical loss of vision, but spiritual ignorance that limits our relationship with others, and with God. Hence, today's Gospel teaches us that to be free from this limitation, we must humbly accept it. Second, by constantly reminding ourselves that: "*Our help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth*" (Ps 95:8), we must humbly ask for help from Christ. So, like the blind man, in our Gospel we must cry out to the Lord in faith: "*Lord that I might see!*" Let us be persistent in our prayer life like Bartimaeus who persisted until Jesus answered his prayers. May God give us grace to persevere in our prayer life. Amen!