

30th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

St. Mark 10:46-52

Many people ask why we must confess our sins before a Priest instead of confessing them directly to God. As social beings we have a desire to be with one another and we seek comfort in each other and so Our Lord gave the power to absolve sins to Priests so that in the person's relationship with the Priest men and women would feel the human touch of divine forgiveness and be assured by the Priest's words, "I absolve you from your sins," that their sins are really and truly forgiven and that they are now a renewed creation before God. Without the consolation of those words spoken by a man in the name of Our Lord can anyone be assured that they are forgiven? If I often ask God for an answer to my prayers then what answer could be more reassuring than words spoken personally to me?

In our submission to the Priest in the confessional, and to his guidance and judgment, I recognise that I cannot justify myself, that I am not all that I need, and I admit my reliance on God. Our faith is not a matter of morals or of simply doing what is right. It is a matter of relationship with God, knowing that we often make mistakes, and sometimes we make dreadful mistakes, and that we need Our Lord's encouragement—His grace—to keep us going, and more than that, to grant to us the fullness of life that He promised. Pope Benedict XVI, said: "We are told two things about God: on the one hand, that He manifested Himself and that He shows us the right path to take; on the other, that God is a God who listens, who is close to us, answers us and guides us. With this we also come to the topic of purity: His will purifies us, His closeness guides us."¹

The human need for forgiveness compelled Bartimaeus to shout to the Lord, "Son of David, Jesus, have pity on me!" (*Mk.* 10:47). Bartimaeus

¹ Homily, Mariapoli Congress Centre, Castel Gandolfo, Sunday, 30 August, 2009.

understood, as did all Jewish people, that forgiveness was reserved to God alone but he saw in Our Lord God Himself and believed that he could be forgiven. Bartimaeus pleads to share in the closeness with God our Father that Our Lord Himself shares, and in spite of the crowds about him telling him to keep quiet Bartimaeus does not give up. We must never allow any one, no matter who they are, and no thing, whether it be alcohol or drugs or gambling or anger or hatred, keep us from Our Lord. We must never confuse the voice of men and demons for the voice of our Holy Mother the Church but keep on going just as Bartimaeus did to hear Our Lord's voice amidst the shouts of the crowds.

Bartimaeus, at the words of Christ, stood up from the side of the road and threw off his cloak, he pushed through the crowds and followed Him. This blind man lying in the gutter had faith enough to call out to Our Lord amidst the crowds shouting him down and with those words from Our Lord, "Go, your faith has made you well," stood up in that gutter, threw off his old life and pushed through the crowds to follow in the footsteps of Christ. We must never underestimate the potential that lies within Our Lord, for in Him and His mercy we can rise up, push through all those forces that shout us down and keep us away from the glory that is our humanity in Christ.

There is nothing that Our Lord cannot heal. No matter what we have done or said, no matter how we have savaged our own lives or torn at the lives of others. That is the whole point of the Resurrection; that even death itself was not enough to stop God from drawing life out of death.

God has created us in His image and likeness and has destined us for His glory. By His grace, we are greater than we know but too often we betray it for arrogance and conceit. When the Priest pours the water into the wine at the altar he says: "By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled Himself to share in our humanity." God came down to earth and became Man so that He could take us up to Heaven.

Bartimaeus rose up from the gutter to stand with Christ. If only we would trust in Our Lord's mercy and seek Him out in confession we could do the same.