**Homily on the Story of a Blind Man**

Today’s Gospel is the lovely story of a blind man who had lost his sight and was forced to live as a beggar. His insistence to call on Jesus despite the crowd’s opposition is a big act of faith. He must have been very happy with what happened to him. The story begins with a blind man sitting beside the road begging. (In Matthew’s rather bald account, there are actually two blind men, cf. Matt 20:29-34.) The ‘road’ is the Way to Jerusalem on which all of Jesus’ disciples must walk together with him. When the beggar hears that Jesus is passing by he begins to call out in a loud voice, “Jesus, Son of David, have compassion on me!” By addressing Jesus as ‘Son of David’ he implies Jesus’ role as Messiah-King.

The people tell him to keep quiet. A useless beggar like him has no right disturbing the Master. But the man ignores them and keeps crying out. (In this he reminds us of the persistent widow we read about the other day.) Now Jesus stops. If the man had not kept calling out, Jesus might not have heard him and might have passed forever out of his life. How often does that happen to me?

Blindness of any type can be crippling, and this was true for the man who sat begging on the side of the road.  He calls out to Jesus two times: “Son of David, have mercy on me!”  Jesus orders the man be brought to him.  And then – I always thought this was interesting – though He is the Christ, the son of living God, and it was probably pretty obvious what type of healing the man needed, Jesus doesn't just go ahead and heal him.  Instead, Jesus says to the man, “What do you want me to do for you?”

The blind man names his request. He trusts that God is able to heal him.  When his sight is granted, the first person he sees is…Christ! And when we pray for restored spiritual sight, *we*, too, may see Christ before us, in everyone! The blind man becomes a witness to God’s power.

Like the blind man, we all suffer with some form of blindness – if not perhaps with our physical eyes, then blindness within our hearts and minds. We focus on the wrong places and this leads us into suffering and despair. Perhaps we gaze ahead with extreme farsightedness, focused on what's in front of us: our calendars, our careers, our plans for next month, next year.   Perhaps we stare at others too much: noticing what they have, what they do for a living, how they look and act; we develop envy, scorn, we judge and desire. Or we focus only on personal needs, while oblivious to the real needs of those around us.

When our eyes are closed, we miss what is right in front of us. When we look elsewhere, with envy or greed or mindless distraction, we miss what is right in front of us. We stare into space, we are scattered, we suffer and blindly fall into sin. Is this how God calls us to live?

Asking for our sight to be healed, to see depth and colors and light, means living through joy and sorrow in the light of Christ. It means seeing everything in God’s illuminating love: the real situation of our own sin, our own habits, our own judgments and failings.  We do this by calling out to God, sometimes more than once, as the blind man did. It requires patience, perseverance.

God bless us all. Amen