

*Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me, a sinner.*

Today's gospel takes us to the heart of the struggle to be a Christian. I am the blind beggar, Bartimaeus, sitting on the road out of Jericho.

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I, too, can be so blind, blind to the beauty around me, blind to the great love God has for me, blind to the grace that God is pouring through my brothers and sisters around me.

I have so many good things of life, a wonderful family, a wonderful parish, a wonderful home. But what good is all that if I haven't got God, if I haven't got his peace in my heart. Suddenly I sense that Jesus is passing this way. *'Son of David, Jesus, have pity on me'.*

But my emotional outburst just causes embarrassment. My express need for Jesus makes others feel awkward. They scold me and tell me to keep quiet. But I shout all the louder, *'Son of David, have pity on me'.*

Jesus isn't embarrassed. Jesus hears my prayer. He stops in his tracks and calls me to him. *'What do you want me to do for you?' 'Master, let me see again.'*

Pope Benedict in his great wisdom, and very much in accordance with the vision of Vatican II, invited Dr Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury, to address the International Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelisation. This is what he said, 'If evangelisation is just rallying the troops or just trying to get people to sign up, something's missing. What is missing is the transformed humanity that the Gospel brings us. And that transformation only comes through prayer and contemplation.'

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And our own Archbishop, Bernard, made a similar point in his presentation to the Synod. "The new evangelisation is not a strategy or programme, but an invitation to an encounter and lifelong relationship with Jesus Christ and his Church. It involves falling in love."

Speaking for myself, it is only very occasionally that my sight is returned and I am able to see again. For most of the time I am at best only partially sighted. For most of the time, I am on the side of the road coming out of Jericho, struggling with temptation and sin and trying to say my prayer, *'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'*

This use of what the Church calls the Jesus Prayer is but one way to enter into stillness and contemplation, one way of allowing God to transform our humanity from within, one way to allow Jesus to restore my sight.

Even for Bartimaeus, the restoration of his sight is but one stage on his onward journey. With his sight restored, he now follows Jesus along the road. Our sight will only be completely restored at the end of that road when we come to see God face to face.

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